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The Collapse of Space: Reconfiguring and Re-Imag(in)ing Social Relations in Native American Written Narratives

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The University of Edinburgh
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I declare that I have composed this thesis and that the work is my own.

Melani Bleck

Abstract

Recently, many scholars of Native American Literature have expressed an increasing concern over the proliferation of Euroamerican based criticism within their field. They believe that the use of theories predicated on a western worldview to analyze American Indian texts condones the ongoing appropriation of Native American culture. The imposition of western theory privileges an Euroamerican narrative and consequently results in the continued subjugation of American Indian experience: it perpetuates the basic assumptions and attitudes behind colonization. This thesis explores the techniques employed by American Indian authors to resist western theory and to offer an alternative perspective from within a tribal framework. Their attempts to redefine reality through a tribal context necessitate the destabilization of certain underpinning assumptions upheld by the dominant society: specifically spatial theory.

The European settlers' perspective of Native America emerged out of their belief that land existed as *space* to acquire. The subsequent policies implemented to facilitate their appropriation of the land had detrimental effects on American Indians who had no concept of space or of land in terms of individual ownership. Space, a western construct, creates a dichotomy between emptiness and occupation: the desired state. Viewing land as an object to possess results in domination and alienation. These ramifications of spatially defining land remain linked to notions of occupation and possession, which imply otherness, or separation from self. Conversely, space and its characteristics, because it is abstraction, held no significance for Native Americans before its introduction by the settlers. Tribal life relies upon integration and connection; therefore, nature and land exists as part of tribal worldviews. Henri Lefebvre, in his book *The Production of Space*, suggests that nature destabilizes the fundamental qualities of space. Due to the reliance of American Indian writings on tribal traditions, which remain inseparable from nature, space must therefore collapse.

Through an examination of Henri Lefebvre's theory of space, the thesis demonstrates that space exists as a western construct and influences the spatial configuration of society's relations. An analysis of contemporary Native American writings unsettles notions of space and the predilection within society to spatially define social relations and negotiations. American Indian authors overwhelmingly use their novels to offer new and innovative ways of re-configuring social interactions and negotiations within a tribal framework. Their works challenge the trend, which remains an extension of the ideologies behind colonialism and Manifest Destiny, within Euroamerican societies of configuring space as lack: an abstract territory to explore, own, dominate, and occupy. The authors included in the thesis, Linda Hogan, Leslie Marmon Silko, N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, and Louise Erdrich trigger a questioning of the deeply ingrained cultural assumptions that influence society in the United States.

Introduction: A Narrative of Space and the Subsequent Separation from Nature

Native American Writings¹

Participating in U.S. Society and its dominant cultural group has not been a matter of choice for American Indian tribes, but a matter of survival. In a recent discussion with James Welch, he told me that, despite this participation, “contemporary Indians have a strong sense of what they are, who they are, and of tribe”, and that he writes to pass on and preserve this for future generations². He feels that scholars who emphasize and focus on the participation of American Indians in dominant culture detract from the unique cultural experiences³ and beliefs of Native Americans. He believes that this trend “sounds dangerously close to assimilation” (Welch, “Tattered Cover Book Store Reading Series”). To combat this form of academic assimilation, this thesis is dedicated to exploring the different value systems and alternative perspectives posited by Native American written works and different ways of analyzing their texts. The call for analysis that focuses on how Native American authors⁴ “revise not simply the record of the past, but the shape of the future”⁵ needs to be answered.

¹ This thesis will refer to novels written by Native American authors as ‘writings’, written narratives, or as works rather than as literature. This shift of vocabulary stresses the importance of the act of writing to the creation of the novels, just as the oral storyteller of many Native American tribes creates stories through the act of speaking. A later chapter will explore the significance of this move away from labeling Native American works as literature.

² James Welch, “Tattered Cover Book Store Reading Series: *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*,” Tattered Cover Book Store, Denver, 24 August 2000.

³ The use of the term ‘experience’ within this thesis refers to the way people react and relate to the world based upon the lens(es) through which they perceive reality. These lenses are influenced by cultural affiliations, peer group(s), family, education, etc. and are unique to each person. For example, the term ‘tribal experience(s)’ within the confines of this thesis refers to an American Indian’s response and relationship to various situations filtered through a lens shaped by his/her specific tribal culture. Experience is a culturally influenced response and relation to reality. Experiencing, through observation of reality and participation, also simultaneously shapes the cultural lens when incorporated into cultural contexts.

⁴ The works of the authors discussed in this thesis qualify as “genuine Indian literature” according to Alan Velie’s definition. Alan R. Velie, “Indian Identity and Indian Literature,” *European Review of Native American Studies* 11.1 (1997): 5. He discusses the requirements as “biology—that is, genetic heritage, or ‘race’—as well as culture, legal status, and self-identification” (“Indian Identity” 5).

⁵ Catherine Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars: The Transformations of Native American Fiction* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1999) xii.

This new genre of analysis needs to move away from western literary theories because “Native American written narrative is also profoundly different, even from the postmodern novel with which it has most profitably been compared” (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* xii-xiii). This thesis will attempt to provide further inquiry into Native American writings’ moves away from western formats and theories, particularly spatial theory⁶, and will examine the ramifications that this move has on reconfiguring and re-imag(in)ing⁷ tribal traditions, tribal contexts, social relations⁸, U.S. society, and notions of the self.

In the United States, society consists of a variety of social and cultural groups with which people engage: participating in one or more groups depending on their ethnicity, gender, economic and social status, and a variety of other factors. However, the laws of the United States reflect the collective beliefs and values that are held and upheld by the dominant social group in the States. This group’s beliefs and values remain tied to Western European “cultural traditions” (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3), which have led to the colonization of Native America. Within the framework of this thesis, the dominant cultural group in the U.S. refers to the group’s relationship to power: the group determines laws and social mores within the United States based upon a narrative informed by their shared beliefs and values. The laws and mores, in turn, create a definition of ‘normal’ that sets up an opposition with ‘ab-normal’ cultural groups that participate, not only within the framework of the dominant social group, but that also subscribe to different values and beliefs through their ties to ‘other’ cultural groups. The beliefs and values of the dominant culture, because of their links to power, influence laws and regulations: therefore, their beliefs and values create a dominant discourse within the United States. Power, a word crucial to a dialogue concerning oppression or cultural invasion, “marks an exchange between social entities in an unequal relationship; the privileged participant either controls knowledge...or has superior knowledge or authority with respect to an audience made up of various ‘unequals’” (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* 4). The invaders of the United States subscribe to a particular narrative of space as a static and bound territory that can be acquired, owned, and confined and that is characterized by the creation of boundaries: boundaries which subsequently lead to abstraction (a link illustrated later in the thesis).

⁶ Throughout this thesis, the term spatial theory refers to a narrative that defines the category ‘space’ based upon “[w]estern cultural traditions” (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3). The characteristics attributed to this particular narrative of space will be explored later. I recognize that the narrative of space advocated by the American Indian novelists also constitutes a theory; however, throughout this thesis, the term theory will allude to its links with dominant discourse.

⁷ The term re-imag(in)es reflects the method implemented in Native American written narratives of imaging, using “means other than visible light”, to produce a new “image” (*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* 578) of reality. “Imaging,” *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1993) 578. The terms also reflect N. Scott Momaday’s belief in the crucial link between Native American identity and the act of imagination: his mother “imagined who she was.” N. Scott Momaday, *The Names: A Memoir* (Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1976) 25. Linda Hogan uses her books to *imagine* new perspectives of reality.

⁸ For the purposes of this thesis, the term ‘social relations’ will refer to how people, as products of their relationships to various social groups, economic factors, education, social institutions, gender, family relations, peer groups, and cultural ties, relate to each other and to their environment: their negotiations, interactions, and relationships.

Due to cultural invasion, this narrative has exerted power over the native populations and has overshadowed their definitions of space. Within the fictional worlds that they create, Native American novelists depict the negative effect that this narrative of space has had on their tribes: a narrative of space that they associate with boundaries (physical, social, and figurative) and abstraction, which exist as characteristics to which they attach negative value.

Arguably, contemporary Native Americans have learned sophisticated methods of negotiating within their invaders' worldview while maintaining cultural ties to an 'other' worldview, and they have managed to incorporate aspects of both cultures into their everyday negotiations and interactions, although the extent to which this phenomenon has occurred remains unique to each person. James Ruppert terms this particular form of social interaction as "mediation"⁹. He defines mediation as "an artistic and conceptual standpoint, constantly flexible, which uses the epistemological frameworks of Native American and Western cultural traditions to illuminate and enrich each other" (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3). Through the inclusion of cultural practices from a variety of Native American tribal frameworks and various Euroamerican frameworks in their written works, the authors reveal the differences and intersections between the various cultural and social groups. Ruppert argues that American Indian writers, as participants in a number of different cultural and social groups that comprise U.S. society, "utilize the different cultural codes simultaneously" (*Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 15). The writers engage in several cultural and social groups and in their writing they 'mediate' between the cultures. For example, N. Scott Momaday has ties to both the Kiowa and Cherokee tribes and his books reflect those ties. Velie, in his article "Indian Identity and Indian Literature", reveals that Momaday's character Grey's self-proclaimed title as "'the mayor of Bote,' [is] a Kiowa in-joke: *bote* is a dish made of cow intestines which the Kiowas love to eat raw" (8). Likewise, Louise Erdrich, an author of German and Chippewa descent, includes references to the Chippewa trickster Nanabush¹⁰ in several books, and in her newest novel, *The Antelope Wife*¹¹, one of her characters, Frank Shawano, bakes a Blitzkuchen: a German cake. In their fiction, the authors incorporate specific references from a variety of cultural groups: tribal and non-tribal. This practice reflects Velie's claims that "[m]ost of the Indian writers with wide readership today...are mixedbloods" ("Indian Identity" 7). The authors' multi-ethnic heritages raise complex issues in analyzing their fiction. Western thinking fails to explain many of the non-western images and values found in these works, but neither do they completely reflect tribal traditions and values from before European intervention. The movements of the authors' characters from cities to reservations and from one cultural code to another exemplify the fluid nature of cultural movement among the Native American community.

This thesis will often refer to American Indians or Native Americans as a collective group for clarity, but it remains important to note that various tribes and persons have experienced unique historical, legal, and social pressures that are not pan-tribal experiences (Deloria, *Custer Died for Your*

⁹ James Ruppert, "Mediation and Multiple Narrative in *Love Medicine*," *North Dakota Quarterly* 59.4 (1991) 3.

¹⁰ Jeanne Smith, "Transpersonal Selfhood: The Boundaries of Identity in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 3.4 (1991): 22.

¹¹ Louise Erdrich, *The Antelope Wife* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 1998).

Sins 246). Due to the different laws and histories of the various countries that make up The Americas (South America, Canada, The United States, and Central America) the experiences of tribes differ from country to country as well as from tribe to tribe. Therefore, this thesis will only address the concerns of American Indians within the United States, and so within the context of this thesis the term America will only refer to the United States. The grouping of the various tribes under the umbrella terms of Native American or Indian American in no way diminishes the variety of cultures and tribal histories experienced by the different tribes. Their worldviews exhibit their cross-cultural membership, and their writings illustrate beliefs from “both inside their cultural conversations and across unfixed boundaries” (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 10). This thesis will focus on the differences that emerge in American Indian writings between the “frameworks of Native American and Western cultural traditions” (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3). Despite their ability to utilize the practices and traditions of several different social and cultural groups, the authors’ works discussed in this thesis cannot purely be understood through traditional western forms of analysis because they undeniably contain elements of various tribal traditions and beliefs. Through the stories’ ties to tribal frameworks, the authors question certain beliefs and values upheld by the dominant social group in the U.S.

Although this thesis will focus mainly on Native American authors’ departure from this western worldview, it is important to note that contemporary Native Americans’ daily subjection and exposure to this way of perceiving reality influences their stories and their tribal contexts. Out of necessity, they have incorporated western forms of thinking and perceiving into their tribal contexts, but a western worldview does not fully explain their experiences and interactions. Although their narratives contain elements that reflect Euroamerican cultural practices, they also contain elements that disorder the underpinning beliefs perpetuated by that worldview. Ruppert argues that, “[i]n essence, they [Native American novelists] set up a dialogic relationship between Native and non-Native discourse fields to *disrupt* the easy engagement of the dominant literary discourse [emphasis added]” (*Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* x). Through their written works, they unsettle certain beliefs and assumptions held by readers who subscribe to the mores and beliefs perpetuated by the dominant social group. According to Rainwater, American Indian authors work simultaneously as part of the dominant culture and as part of ‘other’ cultures as well. Their narrative “incorporates ethnic signs and nonwestern worldviews, yet achieves its full meaning under social and textual conditions defined within the dominant culture” (*Dreams of Fiery Stars* 10). However, despite their ties to ‘the dominant culture,’ she argues that their stories still disrupt and unsettle the beliefs and values held by that culture. She claims that “the circulation of Indian (and other ethnic) writings within the dominant society reveals that the dominant discourse contains within itself a potentiality for its own destabilization” (*Dreams of Fiery Stars* 10). From within, the authors question the underpinning attitudes and assumption behind dominant culture’s discourse.

Today, many American Indians have little, or no, exposure to traditional practices. In fact, Alan Velie claims that “[t]oday most Indians speak only English” (“Indian Identity” 6), and in an interview with reporter Jonathan Marshall, a Navajo named Ricky Small Canyon claims that “[t]he

younger generation don't know much about traditional life"¹². Although many American Indians live off reservation, those that remain on the reservations still face poverty issues¹³. Alex Kershaw claims that "Pine Ridge [Reservation] is the poorest place in America: the per capita income is a fifth of the US average, and unemployment is a steady 85 per cent"¹⁴. This poverty plays a role in the drug problems on reservations. Drugs like crack are "now making the greatest impact on minority communities that already suffer high levels of poverty...[a]nd it is on the reservations across the nation that crack has made the most rapid inroads" (Kershaw 20). Many of the Native American authors address these issues in their fiction. They create their fiction to perform specific functions: to teach traditional values and traditions to generations of American Indians partially, or completely, severed from their tribal traditions and to envision new ways of perceiving reality. To accomplish this goal, several of the authors create fictitious traditional communities and characters that remain immersed in tribal values and beliefs. By definition, their fiction contains elements that do not reflect contemporary reality; however, the authors succeed in addressing real issues facing the Native American community while they simultaneously attempt to alter "contemporary reality" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* ix). They offer an alternative to the drugs and alienation through traditional values and beliefs.

Analysis concerning Native American written works must also include an examination of Native American history and how American Indian authors reconfigure that history because "in a very real way history *forms* native writing"¹⁵. Their written narratives often incorporate and rewrite historical events that shape Native America, and the concerns of Native American writers stem from their troubled history with the United States' government. This thesis will focus on the literary methods that Native American authors use to revise their past, and the retroactive ramifications that their narratives have on their history. This retro-analysis triggers proactive analysis that "shape[s]...the future" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* xii) and American Indian writings. The following section will specifically deal with crucial historical events that continue to affect Native Americans, and how Native American authors use their narratives to reconfigure the appropriation of their history, their experiences, and their lives.

¹² Jonathan Marshall, "Land of Hopi and Glory," *The Observer* 23 Feb. 1997: 48.

¹³ In his attempt to conduct a geographical and economic survey of Native Americans in the United States, Klaus Frantz illustrates the changing demography of the Native American population. He reveals that up until 1940 "most American Indians still lived in rural areas, 62% on Indian reservations" while "[t]oday almost 54 % of all American Indians [those who identify themselves as being Native Americans] live in cities" (89). This data illustrates the separation from tribal traditions that Small Canyon discusses. Klaus Frantz, *Indian Reservations in the United States* (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1999) 89.

¹⁴ Alex Kershaw, "Fighting for the Unborn," *The Observer Magazine* 7 March 1999: 20.

¹⁵ Kimberly M. Blaeser, "The New 'Frontier' of Native American Literature: Dis-Arming History with Tribal Humor," *Native American Perspectives on Literature and History*, ed. Alan R. Velie (London: U of Oklahoma P, 1994) 37.

Retro-Analyzing History: The Legacy of 'Cultural Invasion' and Native American Writings' Revision of History

Although contact with Europeans (and later Euroamericans) has affected American Indians for many centuries, this section is not the appropriate forum to engage in an in depth historical analysis. This brief historical introduction will merely attempt to explain how a select group of key events, ranging from military tactics to federal policy, directly affect present day American Indians, their authors, and their written works.

The history of the external, and now internal, colonization of Native America remains complicated due to the different legal and social arrangements that various tribes have with the United States' government. Later in the thesis, I will argue that Native American written works are not postmodern texts, but here I argue that neither do they fulfill the criteria for post-colonial texts. Glenn Morris delimits the necessary components of a colony. He states that "[c]olonies are defined through three basic criteria: 1. foreign domination, 2. the presence of a political/territorial entity in the colony, and 3. geographical separation from the colonizing power"¹⁶. He also argues that "indigenous nations within the U.S. satisfy each of these criteria" (Morris 74); therefore Native Americans continue to exist as a colonized people. Due to their existence on reservations, their lack of self-governance, and the habitation of Native America by European settlers, Native America remains a colony, not a post-colony. This historical introduction will not attempt to do justice to the vast historical and contemporary legal complications between American Indians' and the United States' respective governments; however, as "History...cannot be divorced from an analysis of American Indian life"¹⁷, this section will attempt to outline a few significant historical events that will contribute to a more expansive understanding of Native American written works through an examination of Native American history as a product of cultural invasion. This analysis of historical events, policies, and Native American authors' reconfigurations of history provides a backdrop for the thesis as it illustrates the link between historical events and policies and the role that Native American written works play in revising history.

Their turbulent history has greatly influenced American Indians (or Native Americans) and the way they conduct their social interactions, negotiations, and relations. Native Americans' history of external and now internal colonization and their subsequent mistreatment by the U.S. settlers and government shapes the way in which Native Americans perceive and interpret reality. Kimberly Blaeser believes that "any discussion of the literary representation of history in the Americas finds its center in the notion of possession, not merely physical possession of the land...but ideological possession, because...those who control the land, have controlled the story (the his-story) of the land

¹⁶ Glenn T. Morris, "International Law and Politics: Toward a Right to Self-Determination for Indigenous Peoples," *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston: South End P, 1992) 74.

¹⁷ Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford M. Little, *American Indians, American Justice* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1983) 1.

and its people" ("The New 'Frontier' of Native American Literature" 38). She illustrates the appropriation of Native American history by the colonizers of the Americas. The invaders, as victors, determine the dissemination of information and influence the way people read history. According to Blaaser, the legacy of occupation and possession that Native Americans experience remains crucial to native writings, and arguably any analysis of their written works requires knowledge and a reanalysis of the Americas' "his-story" ("The New 'Frontier' of Native American Literature" 38). Native American writings challenge the invaders' narrative of occupation and ownership by reconfiguring history. The specific cases discussed in this section illuminate the troubled historical relationship between the United States and the various Native American tribes that continues to plague Native Americans and informs their written works.

Many of the issues currently affecting American Indians in the United States of America stem from the United States' governmental policies, past and present, concerning Native Americans' property, their schooling, the criteria for defining an American Indian, and the nature (or lack) of their own governmental power. The policies that deal with these issues reflect the characteristics that define cultural invasion¹⁸ and were arguably implemented in order for the United States to acquire more land, to eradicate Native Americans altogether (a mentality residual from the military's dealings with American Indians), to force assimilation, and to dominate Native America¹⁹. Before legal and governmental policies were created, the military strategies concerning Native Americans set the precedent for the policies that followed.

These tactics, which pre-dated the American Revolution and lasted until the late nineteenth century, range from purposefully exposing Native American tribes to diseases and epidemics to curtailing their food sources²⁰. M. Annette Jaimes claims that "contemporary history holds no shortage of genocidal examples to which the U.S. destruction of its indigenous population might be in some ways compared" ("Introduction: Sand Creek the Morning After" 3). The military strategies that span over a century were devised largely to eradicate American Indian tribes, arguably due to their failure to conform to the narrative and laws upheld by the United States and in order to acquire their land. This failure to conform posed (and still poses) a threat to the framework of the United States.

Sources indicate that the earliest documented "[experiment] in biological warfare" (Jaimes, "Introduction" 7) was attempted by Lord Jeffrey Amherst in 1763 when he detailed his plan to "[inculcate] . . . the Ottawas" with "smallpox" (Jaimes, "Introduction" 7). He stated his intention in a letter to a subordinate: "I will try to [contaminate] them with some blankets that may fall into their hands" (qtd. Stiffarm and Lane 32). The military's efforts to eradicate Native Americans not only included purposefully contaminating American Indians with disease, but the military also took measures designed to reduce Native American food sources. Lenore Stiffarm and Phil Lane site an

¹⁸ I will define cultural invasion later in this chapter.

¹⁹ M. Annette Jaimes, "Introduction: Sand Creek the Morning After," *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston: South End P, 1992) 1-12.

²⁰ Lenore A. Stiffarm and Phil Lane Jr, "The Demography of Native North America: A Question of American Indian Survival," *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston: South End P, 1992) 23-54.

example of this military strategy through “General Phil Sheridan’s policy, applied mainly during the 1870s, of exterminating at least 60 million buffalo,” which “served to impose starvation conditions upon entire peoples, dramatically lowering their resistance to disease” (Stiffarm and Lane 33). These examples of military tactics served to reduce, dramatically, the Native American population, although the extent of the damage is controversial.²¹

Again, military and governmental plans to annihilate Native Americans were revealed. The military admitted its intentions “[b]y the mid-19th century” when “U.S. policy makers and military commanders were stating—openly, frequently, and in plain English—that their objective was no less than the ‘complete extermination’ of any native people who resisted being dispossessed of their lands, subordinate to federal authority, and assimilated into the colonizing culture” (Stiffarm and Lane 34). Federal and legal policies that arguably adhered to similar goals of extermination soon took the place of military strategy. Policies and laws that support the assimilation and eradication of Native Americans continued well into the twentieth century. Paula Gunn Allen argues that the invaders of Native American are guilty of “[t]he physical and cultural genocide of American Indian tribes”²². Later, during her discussion of the noble savage narrative imposed upon American Indians, Allen again equates the treatment of American Indians by their invaders as genocide. She claims that “[t]he American belief in progress and evolution makes this [the idea of the noble savage] a particularly difficult idea to dislodge, even though it is a root cause of the genocide practiced against American Indians since the colonial period” (*The Sacred Hoop* 5). Jaimes, Allen, and Stiffarm and Lane all equate the treatment of American Indian tribes by the U.S. military and government as genocide in specific instances. Perhaps the most extreme case of the continuation of the strategy to eliminate the tribes can be seen in the “policy of involuntary surgical sterilization—another blatant break of the Genocide Convention—imposed upon native women, usually without their knowledge, by the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ so-called Indian Health Service (IHS) during the late 1960s and the first half of the ‘70s”²³. So, although outright military confrontations with Native Americans had largely ceased, policy-makers continued to carry out the goal, initially carried out by military strategy, of eradicating Native Americans.

Attempts to exterminate Native Americans emerge out of the static worldview that characterizes cultural invasion, but also result from the threat that Native legal rights create for the United States. Jimmie Durham “once explained ‘American Indian’ legal rights and the consequent demands of the American Indian Movement to a member of the Institute for Policy Studies. His

²¹ The actual number of the native population is in dispute. Different historians have vastly differing opinions as to the original numbers of Native Americans. James M. Mooney estimated that “approximately 1,152,590” native people lived on the American continent while “H.J. Spinden...[suggested] that fifty to seventy-five million native peoples had lived in the Americas (circa 1200)” (Stiffarm and Lane 25).

²² Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon P, 1992) 3.

²³ M. Annette Jaimes and Theresa Halsey, “American Indian Women: At the Center of Indigenous Resistance in North America,” *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston: South End P, 1992) 326.

response was, 'That would mean the breakup of the United States'"²⁴. Arguably, American Indian legal rights pose a threat to the *unity* of the United States, but not the only threat. Native American written works also threaten the dominant discourse of the U.S. The authors' attempts to rewrite their history undermine the worldview subscribed to by the dominant culture in the United States.

In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire explains the reasons behind, and the ramifications of, this static narrative in his discussion of a particular "phenomenon" that he names "cultural invasion"²⁵. Cultural invasion allows for the continued oppression of the invaded: it "serves the end of the conquest and the preservation of oppression" (Freire 159). Policy based on the invaders' static perception of reality replaces the military invasion as a means to exert power over the invaded people. It involves the invaders "penetrat[ing] the cultural context of another group" and imposing "their own view of the world upon those they invade" (Freire 159). He qualifies the effects of the invasion on the invaded in terms of the damage done to the invaded peoples' cultural and creative expression, and he analyzes the underpinning attitudes that shape the invaders' worldview. He argues that cultural invasion "always involves a parochial view of reality, a static perception of the world, and the imposition of one world view on another. It implies the: 'superiority' of the invader and the 'inferiority' of those who are invaded" (Freire 159)²⁶. The invaders' rigid perspective of reality legitimizes their domination over, and their attempts to eradicate, the invaded people due to the failure of the invader to acknowledge the validity of 'other' perspectives. As "the power of decision is located" not with the invaded "but with the invaders" (Freire 159), cultural invasion renders the invaded people powerless.

The ideology that shapes cultural invasion not only legitimizes the military conquest of an 'inferior' people, but it also *informs* the policies that emerge out of the conquest. Many of the previously mentioned military conflicts arose with the westward expansion of the United States. A theory based on property acquisition and sanctioned by John Locke, along with the legislation and military strategy at the time, influenced this western expansion. Locke's arguments, found in *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), concerning man's inherent right to ownership of property, and his belief that "[a]s much land as a man tills, plants, improves, cultivates, and can use the product of, so much is his property"²⁷ were adopted by Euroamericans' belief in Manifest Destiny. According to Glenn Morris, "[t]he expansion of the U.S. was fueled by the racist philosophy Manifest Destiny" (Morris 67). Manifest Destiny also affected subsequent legislation that led to the "expropriation of more than 95 percent of...[Native Americans'] original land base" and their "complete loss of control over the resources within and upon...[their] residual territory" (Jaimes, "Introduction" 8). The

²⁴ Jimmie Durham, "Cowboys and...Notes on Art, Literature, and American Indians in the Modern American Mind," *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston: South End P, 1992) 426.

²⁵ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: The Seabury p, 1970) 159.

²⁶ When the word other appears in inverted commas, I am alluding to Edward Said's and Trinh T. Minh-ha's discussion of cultural otherness. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

²⁷ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (London: Everyman's Library, 1936) 132.

westward movement, spurred by Manifest Destiny, dispossessed American Indians of their traditional tribal land and gradually stripped them of any agency.

Specific examples that illustrate the ramifications of this philosophy include the 1887 General Allotment Act and a Supreme Court decision in 1823. John Locke's notion of property influenced the Supreme Court's decision, for "[i]t was upon this particular doctrine that Chief Justice of the Supreme Court John Marshall, in his 1823 opinion in the *Johnson v. McIntosh* case, based the notion that the U.S. holds 'inherent and preeminent rights' over Indian lands" (Stiffarm and Lane 28). Stiffarm and Lane point out that both the Doctrine of Discovery and the Rights of Conquest "[were] eventually articulated in John Locke's philosophy of Natural Law" (Stiffarm and Lane 28). According to Vine Deloria Jr., both of these philosophies affected Marshall's decision concerning *Johnson v. McIntosh*. He asserts that, in the *Johnson v. McIntosh* case, "Marshall used his opinion in this decision to develop an American interpretation of the doctrine of discovery" and "that conquest [of Native America] gave the white settlers ownership and title to Indian lands" (*American Indians, American Justice* 26). Furthermore, "[h]e [Marshall] suggested that discovery did indeed give title to the land and that this title was recognized by the other European countries" (*American Indians, American Justice* 4). In his *Two Treaties of Government*, Locke referred to Native America as an "uncultivated waste" (336): a belief which "thus legitimated the appropriation of the American wilderness as a right, and even as an imperative, under natural law"²⁸. Robert Williams, Jr. also illustrates the influence that Locke had on the *Johnson v. McIntosh* decision. He confirms that "McIntosh's counsel" named "a long list of authorities, including Locke", and cited both "[d]iscovery" and "the law of nature" in support of their defense (311). He goes further and directly links Marshall's decision concerning the *Johnson v. McIntosh* case to Locke's arguments concerning property and natural law:

Marshall's opinion admitted, in Lockean fashion, that this inquiry was confined by boundaries demarcated by the actual conduct of individuals in a state of nature agreeing on the rules of property acquisition for their new society. (Williams 312)

Stiffarm and Lane, Deloria, and Williams all connect Locke's arguments concerning the Doctrine of Discovery, Natural Law, and land as property with legislation that ultimately led to the loss of tribal land.

This ruling, which legalized the acquisition of native land, was soon followed by the 1887 General Allotment Act. Ward Churchill and Glenn Morris outline the specifics of this act:

By this measure (ch. 119, 24 Stat. 388, now codified as amended at 25 U.S.C. 331 *et seq.*; also known as the "Dawes Act" or "Dawes Severalty Act"), the U.S. intervened unilaterally in the internal affairs of native nations to break up their traditional systems of collective land tenure. In order to retain any land at all, native people—legally defined for the first time on the basis of a racist 'blood quantum' code employed for identification purposes by the federal government—were compelled to accept individually deeded land parcels....Once each 'federally recognized Indian' had received his or her allotment of land, the balance of reserved Indian land was opened up to non-Indian homesteading...

²⁸ Robert A. Williams Jr., *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourse of Conquest* (London: Oxford UP, 1990) 248.

[b]etween 1887 and 1934, approximately two-thirds (100 million acres) of all Indian-reserved land was appropriated by the government through this mechanism²⁹.

The United States' government stripped native nations of their land and their sovereign governmental powers, while simultaneously appropriating more land for the settlers. The United States' lust for power over Native America and its inhabitants did not end here. It has been argued that other "statutes including the Major Crimes Act (1885),... Indian Citizenship Act, Indian Reorganization Act (1934), and various termination and relocation acts during the 1950s and 60s" also served "to extend absolute U.S. control over jurisdiction, land tenure, national allegiance, and governance over even the residues of indigenous territoriality" (Morris 68-9). This gradual, yet effective, transfer of military, legal, and governmental power and land from Native American governments to the U.S. government resulted in the absolute domination of the invaders over American Indians.

In order to understand legislation concerning Native Americans, one must examine the relationship between the concept of space and property that Euroamericans espouse. This relationship plays an essential role in much of American Indian written works as a negative product of a rigid worldview. The relationship between the concept of space and property³⁰ remains crucial to understand legislation concerning Native Americans. In 1823 Chief Justice of the Supreme Court John Marshall decided that the United States holds "'inherent and preeminent rights' over Indian lands" (Stiffarm and Lane 28). This sense of ownership extended to include land in terms of property and the American Indians' personal lives as well. The new country's adherence to the European tradition of colonization resulted in The General Allotment Act that led to the native loss of land and tribal way of life (Churchill and Morris 14) through division and the creation of literal and theoretical boundaries. This climate gave birth to a new strategy to measure and define American Indians. Defining Native Americans using the rigid and limiting blood quantum standard reflects the "parochial view of reality" (Freire 159) that characterizes cultural invasion.

The government's legal definition of a Native American affected the statutes and acts listed earlier. The basic premises for the definition initially emerged through the different legal treatment of "full-blooded" and "mixed-blooded" American Indians due to the "'blood quantum' or 'degree of Indian blood' standard of American Indian identification which had been adopted by Congress in 1887 as part of the General Allotment Act"³¹. The reasons behind this standard included the desire of

²⁹ Ward Churchill and Glenn T. Morris, Table, "Key Indian Laws and Cases," *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston: South End P, 1992) 14.

³⁰ Catherine Rainwater unwittingly illustrates how the dominant discourse of space disguises its inception. She inadvertently reveals the underpinning problems that shape the troubled relationship between land and spatial theory that the dominant social group espouses. In her discussion of American Indian novels, she claims that they "insist that rehabilitation of the land (space) in the present (time) depends upon healing one's own body" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* 125). She unmasks the deception through her conflation of space and land. Space, within "[w]estern cultural traditions" (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3), has become synonymous with land; therefore, it inscribes its characteristics onto land, and influences our perceptions of land. Land, as bound property, serves to mask space, as this particular narrative conflates land and space.

³¹ M. Annette Jaimes, "Federal Indian Identification Policy: A Usurpation of Indigenous Sovereignty in North America," *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston: South End P, 1992) 126.

the United States' government for land acquisition, "'assimilation,' as federal policy makers described their intentions, or...to bring about the destruction and disappearance of American Indian peoples"³². The results of this policy were, and are, disastrous in terms of both land loss and future legislation.

Native history remains inextricably linked to the acquisition of space that characterizes colonization. The belief that space exists as something to own and as something to divide fuels the attitudes that advocate colonization. Along with land acquisition and legally defining American Indians according to racial stereotypes, education plays a crucial role in cultural invasion and causes the most long-term damage to the Native American population. Barry Barnes, in his discussion of power, and especially in his arguments concerning "Divide and Rule"³³, discusses the link between knowledge and power³⁴:

For effective domination of large numbers of subordinates in extreme conditions of divide and rule it is important that those subordinates should possess so much knowledge and no more....they should lack whatever knowledge might help them to establish co-operative interactions with others. (Barnes 101)

By limiting the transmission of information, the "power-holders" (Barnes 98) ensure their claim to power. This strategy "is a valuable resource in the continued enforcement of their subordination" (Barnes 102). Arguably, the most effective way to control knowledge is to control education. The "power-holders" (Barnes 98) of the United States use education to disseminate information and knowledge. Academia and education, as tools of cultural invasion, limit the knowledge to which the invaded peoples have access. Most academic institutions, despite their increasing inclusion of ethnically diverse peoples and courses, predominately rely on an education curriculum and system that was founded upon an Euroamerican worldview. In this manner, the "power-holders" (Barnes 98) perpetuate and privilege one narrative to the exclusion of 'other' narratives³⁵.

Remi Clignet defines assimilation in his article entitled "Damned if You Do, Damned if You Don't: The Dilemmas of Colonizer-Colonized Relations"³⁶. Remi Clignet states that "'[a]ssimilation' becomes the ideological framework within which the colonizer stresses the universality of his own culture" (307). Based on this definition of assimilation, Jorge Noriega argues that the educational policy in the United States towards American Indians acts as an example of ideological oppression and serves to limit the knowledge available to the Native American population. The invaders'

³² Rebecca L. Robbins, "Self-Determination and Subordination: The Past, Present, and Future of American Indian Governance," *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston: South End P, 1992) 93.

³³ Barry Barnes, *The Nature of Power* (Cambridge: Polity P, 1998) 98.

³⁴ The use of Barnes's theories concerning divide and rule in this section does not refer to his arguments with regards to the subordinate populations' inability to act against the "power-holders" (Barnes 98), but rather to the necessity of limiting the transmission of knowledge and information to the subordinates as a means of continuing oppression.

³⁵ During the invasion of Native America, the division between those in power and those without power was clearly demarcated between Europeans and non-Europeans. Today, due to the ethnic diversity and cross-cultural participation of people in the U.S., the demarcations have become blurred.

³⁶ Remi Clignet, "Damned if You Do, Damned if You Don't: The Dilemmas of Colonizer-Colonized Relations," *Comparative Education Review* 15.3 (1971): 307.

“ideological framework” (Clignet 307) becomes the only framework available to the invaded people through formal education. Education historically served to remove American Indian children from their tribal framework physically and intellectually. Alix Casteel states that “The Bureau of Indian Affairs sought to divorce the Native American children from their extended families, [and] tribal connections...by placing them in government boarding schools”³⁷. Due to the use of education as a “mechanism by which colonialism has sought to render itself effectively permanent”³⁸, the modern American Indian finds him/herself, like other ‘minority’ groups in the United States, alienated from traditional forms of tribal learning and mediating between two or more often contradictory worldviews and belief systems.

All of the historical events, strategies, and policies mentioned in this section have crucially affected Native Americans and have dictated the terms that define their roles within the larger framework of the United States’ dominant social narrative. The constant battle against policies designed to either eradicate or assimilate the Native American population, using one method or another, has had a demoralizing effect:

our ability to favorably alter these conditions is drastically curtailed by the imposition of a federal order...that has ‘legally’ supplanted our traditional forms of governance,...manipulated our numbers and identity, usurped our cultural integrity,...and systematically miseducated the bulk of our youths to believe that all this is, if not just, at least inevitable. (Jaimes, “Introduction” 8)

The problems that affect the contemporary Native American population suffuse all aspects of their lives, and indeed their very existence. As members of communities and as individuals, they are products of their colonized history. Their position as victims of colonization; the blood quantum policy, which dictates the legal definition of a Native American³⁹; their loss of agency; and their forced assimilation have largely shaped American Indians’ social interactions and negotiations. Recently, “a substantial number of the 328 federally acknowledged tribes...have entered a new era of prosperity after a second affirmation of tribal sovereign powers came from the federal courts, which ruled that tribes could operate casinos on reservations” (Frantz 294). The recognition of tribal powers has allowed Native American tribes to implement changes and alter conditions on the reservations. Although these casinos have liberated some tribes from grinding poverty, the casinos remain controversial due to different federal and tribal taxation laws. Native American authors use their

³⁷ Alix Casteel, “Dark Wealth in Linda Hogan’s *Mean Spirit*,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 6.3 (Fall 1994): 60.

³⁸ Jorge Noriega, “American Indian Education in the United States: Indoctrination for Subordination to Colonialism,” *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston: South End P, 1992) 374.

³⁹ Alan Velie discussion of identity illustrates the difficulties with basing identity solely on biology:

Over the years...Indians have tended to intermarry very heavily, with the result that biology is no longer a reliable index of identity. According to demographer Russell Thornton, over 50% of Indians in the United States are married to non-Indians.

Despite the fact that tribal membership remains linked to blood quantum, he stresses that “self-identification” largely determines “Indianness” (6).

written works to portray the effects of their history upon their people, as a tool to combat cultural invasion, and to reconfigure their social negotiations and relations.

Freire's model accurately describes the cultural invasion that Native Americans experience under the oppressive rule of the narrow worldview that led to cultural invasion, which leads to the subjugation of Native Americans through a rigid and hierarchical classification system that privileges one view over an 'other' view. Native American authors use their works as a platform to express a worldview that differs from their invaders' worldview: a platform that allows them to reconfigure their colonized history, their interactions with and within the dominant social group in the U.S., and their social relations. Native American works contribute to a reconfiguring and re-imag(in)ing of Native American experience. The authors challenge the underlying premise behind the dominant culture of oppression and domination by writing and imagining social relations within a tribal context.

Freire believes that, when cultural invasion is implemented, "the invaders are the authors of, and actors in, the process; those they invade are the objects" (159). Cultural invasion of Native America displaces the invaded people from their contexts, and results in the objectification of Native Americans. Jean Baudrillard discusses how objects, when perceived in isolation from their utilitarian purpose become appropriated:

Possession cannot apply to an implement, since the object I utilise always directs me back to the world. Rather it applies to that object once it is *divested of its function and made relative to a subject*...They thereby constitute themselves as a *system*, on the basis of which the subject seeks to piece together his world, his personal microcosm⁴⁰.

According to Jean Baudrillard's above quotation, the value of an object correlates to its relationship "to a subject" (Baudrillard 7). The object itself, removed from its functional task, has no inherent value but it relies on the subject that has commodified and defined it in relation to the subject. For example, anthropology's "scientific" view of, and its interest in, 'other' cultures leads to a commodification of artifacts and objects from that culture in an effort to define the 'other'. The perception of Native Americans as the cultural 'other', and the belief that they and their possessions are objects of study, allows the dominant social group to "piece together...[its] world" (Baudrillard 7): its reality. According to the quotation from Jean Baudrillard, the invaders become the subjects by means of which the objects, Native Americans or their possessions, obtain meaning. This method of objectification leads to the abstraction of American Indians from their tribal contexts.

By inculcating American Indians into the dominant social group's "microcosm" (Baudrillard 7), it dispossesses them from their tribal framework. As a product of reality perceived through boundaries and abstraction, the dominant social group abstracts Native Americans from their tribal contexts, which parallels Baudrillard's discussion of objects:

Thus any given object can have two functions: it can be utilised, or it can be possessed....The two functions are mutually exclusive. Ultimately, the strictly utilitarian object has a social status...Conversely, the object pure and simple, divested of its function, abstracted from any practical context, takes on a strictly

⁴⁰ Jean Baudrillard, "The System of Collecting," *The Culture of Collecting*, eds. J. Elsner and R. Cardinal (London: Reaktion Books, 1994) 7.

subjective status. Now its destiny is to be collected. (Baudrillard 8)

Native Americans have lost 'social status' within an Euroamerican social group when perceived as objects of study. Due to the predilection of Euroamerican thought to separate objects from their contexts, Native Americans have been "divested" of their "function...[and] abstracted from any practical context" (Baudrillard 8). The invaders perceive Native Americans in isolation from their tribal contexts: an attitude which leads to the objectification of American Indians, their belongings, and their culture. By resisting the abstraction that stems from this narrative of reality, Native American authors re-contextualize and reappropriate their social relations and experiences within a tribal framework.

Leslie Marmon Silko's character Sterling, from her novel *Almanac of the Dead*, describes the objects found in a museum that include "pottery and baskets so ancient they could only have come from the graves of ancient ancestors...[and] the poor shriveled skin and bones of some ancestor taken from her grave"⁴¹. Here Silko challenges the appropriation of Native Americans and their belongings by giving human and tribal context to the items through their association to people. Also contained within the museum as objects are the Laguna's "babies...[the] 'esteemed and beloved ancestors'" (*Almanac of the Dead* 31) that "were not merely carved stones, these were beings" (*Almanac of the Dead* 33). The acquisition of the ancestors reflects the predilection of a social group that subscribes to a western worldview to own and study living things as inanimate objects. Also significant to this incident is the manner in which the museum keeps the kachina figures. They remain within "[g]lass cases" (*Almanac of the Dead* 33), and one member of the Laguna tribe "kept bumping his fingers against the glass case" (*Almanac of the Dead* 33) as if it did not exist. The museum has spatially separated the spirits from life, within glass boundaries, and contained them within a spatial bound vacuum. The delegation from the Laguna tribe fails to recognize the existence of the glass barrier because the kachina figures are not objects but living spirits. Through this incident, Silko depicts the differences in perspective between an abstract worldview that objectifies living beings and a tribal worldview based upon connection with the land and all living creatures.

Linda Hogan, like Silko, reclaims her history and undermines the narrative of ownership that characterizes American Indians' history of cultural invasion. She gives a similar account:

I remember the dentist who proudly used the skull of Chief Joseph as an ashtray; the military men who were part of the Sand Creek massacre and who pinned the innermost parts of Indian women's bodies to their hat and over their saddlehorns. I remember, too, the account of the survivors, who felt such grief that their women and children and elders were killed that they cut themselves, trying to die, weeping⁴².

She attaches personal context to the human objects. Hogan links the various parts of the Indian bodies, which the soldiers used as trophies, to their families and their tribe through grief. She also relates an account of an Indian named Ishi whose tribe "lived undiscovered for over fifty years" (Hogan, *Dwellings* 110). They eventually found Ishi, the last member of his tribe. Hogan states that

⁴¹ Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991) 33.

⁴² Linda Hogan, *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World* (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1995) 73.

his captors “must have believed he was not a man in the way they were men, for they carried away his few possessions as souvenirs for their families” (Hogan, *Dwellings* 110). The invaders’ sense of ownership extended to include Ishi himself, and “[f]or the next four years Ishi lived in a museum as a living exhibit” (Hogan, *Dwellings* 110). His captors removed him from his context and turned him into a commodity.

Wendy Rose uses poetry as a forum for reconfiguring history. She quotes an actual catalogue advertisement for Native American belongings. The catalogue defines the artifacts according to monetary value, which directly correlates to the part they played in “the Wounded Knee Massacre”⁴³: “Moccasins at \$140, hide scraper at \$350, buckskin shirt at \$1200, woman’s leggings at \$275, bone breastplate, at \$1000” (Rose 197). By valuing them according to their involvement in one historical event, the catalogue assigns an artificial context to the items based on a one dimensional and linear view of history, rather on its tribal and “utilitarian” (Baudrillard 8) context. Through the layout of her poem, Rose emphasizes this discrepancy. She visually sets the catalogue apart from the actual poem, and she uses different size fonts for the two different sections. These differences reinforce the oppositional stances that the two separate narratives, one based on objectification of the objects and the other based on the objects’ links to tribal and personal contexts, depict. Rose’s poem then offers a human and tribal context for the catalogued items by personalizing the account and offering the reader the day to day purposes and uses for the items:

My feet were frozen to leather,
pried apart, left behind—bits of flesh
on the moccasins, bits of paper deerhide
on the bones. My back was stripped of its cover,
its quilling intact; it was torn,
was taken away. My leggings were taken
like in a rape and shriveled
to the size of stick figures
like they had never felt the push
of my strong woman’s body
walking in the hills. (Rose 198)

She illustrates that the items had a human and social context by linking the items to the owner’s body. This poem denies the invader the right to own and acquire the items that obtain significance for the invader, not through their social and human purposes, but rather through one historical event that over-writes the personal context of the items.

Henri Lefebvre, in his discussion of social space’s production, argues that “Things lie, and when, having become commodities, they lie in order to conceal their origin...they tend to set themselves up as absolutes. Products and the circuits they establish (in space) are fetishized and so become more ‘real’ than reality itself” (Lefebvre 81). He concedes that analysis of things in space, objects found in museums, masks the “origin” (Lefebvre 81) and context of the objects by abstracting them from their contexts. However, Lefebvre ignores the disastrous effects that his narrative of space has, past and present, on ethnic communities, namely Native Americans, and he still advocates ‘his space’ as a positive “means of control, and hence of domination, of power” (Lefebvre 26). In his

⁴³ Wendy Rose, “I Expected my Skin and my Blood to Ripen,” *That’s What She Said: Contemporary Poetry and Fiction by Native American Women*, ed. Rayna Green (Bloomington: Indian UP, 1984) 197.

quest to unite mental and social space, he ignores the ramifications that result from the application of abstract spatial analysis to things, people, and social groups. Henri Lefebvre's main argument posits that "theorizing social space is not independent from theorizing society"⁴⁴. He believes that social relations exist spatially; however, analyzing things, social and cultural groups, relations, people, and experiences, based on his definition of space serves to sever them from their contexts because his narrative of space, a narrative based on western cultural practices, serves to conceal and mask origins (Lefebvre 81) through the creation of boundaries. Any social group that defines itself according to a narrative of space based on boundaries and divisions acts out and advocates appropriation. Conversely, by providing human and tribal contexts to the items, the American Indian authors not only reclaim the items, but also undermine the narrative imposed on the items by the invaders.

The written works of American Indian authors remain inseparable from reconfiguring history and re-imag(in)ing their social relations, interactions, and negotiations. Their perception of historical events alters the history that the colonizers of the United States have espoused for centuries. Jimmie Durham argues that the rift in the United States exists as a struggle, currently and historically, "between Indians and settlers" and that this split, "As the hidden operant for all American narratives, its...concealment and its methods...served to take away from Indians a reality in the world, and therefore our voices in the world" (Durham 433). The act of writing becomes an important way of regaining voice, reconfiguring reality for Native Americans, and resisting cultural invasion. Their works often depict the commodification of American Indian artifacts. These fictional accounts resemble the historical accounts of museums possessing stolen items, often religious in nature, and incidents of artifacts and bodies stolen from Native American graves. Through the medium of fiction, the authors reclaim the artifacts and their historical significance by de-objectifying, de-mystifying, and re-contextualizing the artifacts, and by challenging the narrative of ownership and domination imposed on the artifacts by the static worldview of the invaders. Native American writings serve to undermine the attempts of the invaders to impose their ideology, based on western discourse, onto the invaded people through military conquest, policy, and education. Although their works remain linked to aspects of western thought, this thesis will examine how Native American writings depart from a western worldview and analyze the innovative ways in which Native American authors re-imag(in)e and interpret their experiences and social relations.

Analyzing Space: Cultural Constructions of Space

The previous section focused on the retroactive effect that Native American writings have on how we perceive history; therefore, the remainder of the thesis will focus on the proactive effects of Native American narratives. Specifically the thesis will examine the way in which Native American

⁴⁴ Erik Swyngedouw, rev. of *The Production of Space*, by Henri Lefebvre, *Economic Geography* 68.3 (1992): 317.

authors depart from a Euroamerican influenced worldview to reconfigure and re-imag(in)e social relations, interactions, and negotiations, as well as the ramifications of Native American writers' rejection of, or their collapse of, traditional western definitions of space. Immanuel Kant addresses the category space in his book, written in 1789 (2nd Edition), *Critique of Pure Reason*. He believes that "[s]pace is a necessary *a priori* representation"⁴⁵; something "not derive[d]...immediately from experience, but from universal rule" (43). According to Kant, space exists as a universal category of human understanding and as initially separate from immediate experience. However, human perceptions remain culturally located and experienced rather than universally determined. Human understanding remains dependent on social, economic, historical and cultural factors. Different cultures perceive and define reality differently. Kant also views space as a "[source] of knowledge" (80) and a realm used by humans to "represent...objects as outside us, and all without exception in space" (Kant 67). As examined in the previous section, Native American novelists do not view things as "outside us" (Kant 67) or separate from experience; therefore, in their fiction, they create a narrative of space that focuses on connection rather than separation.

The authors examined in this thesis associate definitions of space based on western thought with the creation of boundaries, which results in separation from context and abstraction. Leslie Marmon Silko discusses the relationship between boundaries, ownership, and abstraction from nature:

The people and the land are inseparable, but at first I did not understand. I used to think there were exact boundaries that constituted 'the homeland,' because I grew up in an age of invisible lines designating ownership. In the old days there had been no boundaries between the people and the land....⁴⁶

She equates her misconception concerning the division between land and people with the creation of boundaries and lines, which indicate possession. Once Silko's perspective shifts back to "the old days" (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 85), or to a tribal context, she realizes that the lines exist as constructions and not as reality. The discussions concerning, and the characteristics attributed to, nature found in this thesis emerge both out of the many references made by American Indian non-fiction and fiction writers to their inseparability with the land, and through analysis of their writing in which land and nature exist as major themes.

Through this bond between the tribal context and nature, Native American novelists attack a narrative of space as mappable property or territory, the narrative constructed in western discourse to explain reality, due to the fact that this narrative has shaped so much of the legislation, discussed in the previous section, that has negatively affected tribal life. Henri Lefebvre states that "space, having attained the conceptual and linguistic level, acts retroactively upon the past...The past appears in a different light, and hence the process whereby that past becomes the present also takes on another aspect"⁴⁷. In the same way, the collapse of this particular narrative of space also causes perceptions

⁴⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St Martin's P, 1929) 68.

⁴⁶ Leslie Marmon Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996) 85.

⁴⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1991) 65.

of the past to shift as American Indian narratives resist it. The resistance consistently found in Native American written works to a reality constructed on this particular narrative of space results in both a retroactive and proactive reconfiguration of social relations, which causes a chain reaction of events that leads readers from diverse backgrounds to re-imag(in)e concepts such as nature, individualism, tradition, theory, academia, language, and writing. As American Indian authors question the predominant perspective of space and resist analysis based on a western worldview, they simultaneously re-stitch⁴⁸ their works into a tribal framework through their stories' links to their oral traditions.

Recently, at a conference in Scotland where I gave a paper on Louise Erdrich's fiction, an anthropologist challenged me on my use of the terms tribe and tribalism. He claimed that the terms, and I quote roughly, were a nineteenth century racist term and had no place in contemporary debate. He then suggested that tribalism was, and again I summarize, a primal way of life and that in Africa people were progressing away from their tribal way of life and towards civilization. While this experience is purely anecdotal, I believe that it raises some important issues. His perception of the tribe as primitive stems from a hierarchically structured reality that privileges progress and linear development. He advocates a move away from tribalism, a state of being that for him exists in the past, and towards civilization, a privileged state of being. Paula Gunn Allen addresses this issue in her book *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*. She objects to the worldview espoused by the anthropologist above, and she claims that "Western studies of American Indian tribal systems are erroneous at base because they view tribalism from the cultural bias of patriarchy" and argues that "Americans" view American Indians as "The noble savage [who] is seen as the appealing but doomed victim of the inevitable evolution of humanity from primitive to postindustrial social orders. The American belief in progress and evolution makes this a particularly difficult idea to dislodge" (*The Sacred Hoop* 4-5). She cautions students to "remember that Indian America does not in any sense function in the same ways or from the same assumptions that western systems do" (7). To heed her warning, and Vine Deloria's claims that "Tribal existence is fast becoming the most important value in life"⁴⁹, this thesis will examine the departure from a western worldview that American Indian contemporary novelists depict in their novels by re-stitching their stories into tribal frameworks⁵⁰.

⁴⁸ I borrow the sewing analogy, here used to connote the re-connection of Native American social relations to their tribal contexts, from Louise Erdrich's newest novel *The Antelope Wife* where the image of sewing dominates the book and the lives of her characters.

⁴⁹ Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins* (London: U of Oklahoma P, 1988), 247.

⁵⁰ As James Ruppert explains in his discussion of Erdrich's novel *Love Medicine*, American Indian novels are based on "a Western structure, set with the task of recreating something of a Native oral tradition, a task...[they] can never completely accomplish" in an attempt to "mediate and thus prepare both audiences for valuing Native ways of meaning and thereby Native cultures, which are the ultimate source of value in the novel." (Ruppert 231). However, although their contemporary novels acquire a western format, according to Allen and Ruppert, they still illustrate American Indian values and beliefs.

Any discussion of social relations within the United States requires an examination of space because “social relations...are constructed and negotiated spatially”⁵¹; however, as perceptions of space and time remain culturally contingent, social relations differ between cultures. Space, when conceived and defined as a narrative of power and territory, fails to be relevant to the experiences of the authors’ fictional Native American characters. Many American Indian academics⁵² insist that criticisms concerning their written narratives too often reflect and uphold the dominant social group’s worldview to the detriment of American Indians. The imposition of a western worldview onto Native American narratives closely mirrors their history of colonization and the appropriation of their experiences by their colonizers. In the following chapters, I will illustrate how Native American authors link their social relations to a tribal context, which reflects a different perception of space rather than an abstract realm predicated on a narrative of space associated with partitions and separation, and how this act of revision affects their perceptions of reality.

The perception of space as a narrative of occupation and as an abstract construct of a western worldview serves to write over the human and personal contexts of ‘objects’ by severing objects’ relationships to each other and to people. It allows for analysis of people, buildings, and things to the exclusion of the multiple contexts that affect them. Removing the people, buildings, and things from their contexts through separation and division creates artificial boundaries that delineate an area of study. Again, Paula Gunn Allen discusses the problems associated with this predilection in western traditions:

Indeed, the non-Indian tendency to separate things from one another—be they literary forms, species, or persons—causes a great deal of unnecessary difficulty with and misinterpretation of American Indian life and culture....Separation of parts into this or that category is not agreeable to American Indians, and the attempt to separate essentially unified phenomena results in distortion. (*The Sacred Hoop* 62)

I believe that the aforementioned tendency stems from the construction of space as bound and static territory. These boundaries distort, as mentioned above, and dissociate things and people from their origins and contexts. The authors discussed in subsequent chapters support Allen’s critique of the Euroamerican predilection towards separation.

Earlier in the introduction, I briefly mentioned Henri Lefebvre and his critique of space. This thesis must engage with his arguments concerning space and spatial theory due to his impact on current perceptions of space. According to Erik Swyngedouw, “Lefebvre’s work holds a unique position in the intellectual history of Marxism and in the way this history became appropriated by geographers from the late 1960s onwards” (Swyngedouw 317). His book changes the way in which space and spatial theory are perceived. His project to scrutinize space and to “search for a unitary theory of physical, mental, and social space” (Swyngedouw 318) in his book *The Production of Space*

⁵¹ Nancy Duncan, “(Re)placings,” *Bodyspace*, ed. Nancy Duncan (London: Routledge, 1996) 4.

⁵² These academics include Catherine Rainwater, Louis Owens, Paula Gunn Allen, and Richard Fleck.

reflects his ties to the “French Communist movement”⁵³ and Marxist thought. Theorists like David Harvey, Edward Soja, and Neil Smith (Swyngedouw 317) have continued his theoretical project by applying his arguments to their particular disciplines; however, the analysis of Lefebvre’s theoretical arguments in this thesis will not engage in a Marxist critique, but rather attempt to illustrate that spatial theory emerges out of a western worldview and fails to account for Native Americans’ experiences.

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre attempts to illustrate that one theory can contain and explain, what he terms, absolute, physical, mental, and social space. He argues that his project will narrow the gap between absolute space and social space and that despite the seemingly irreconcilable differences between different categories of space (mental, physical, social, and absolute) the categories actually share similar theoretical premises⁵⁴. He advocates that “every society” should produce “a space, its own space” (Lefebvre 31), and yet he criticizes the trend in academia to create “an indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within, the next: geographical, economic, demographic, sociological, ecological, political, commercial, national, continental, global” (Lefebvre 8). He contradicts his call for producing space by criticizing the proliferation of other spaces. Lefebvre also fails to consider the different configurations that space might assume for the different cultural groups that make up a given society. He states that “When we evoke ‘space’, we must immediately indicate what occupies that space and how it does so....Space considered in isolation is an empty abstraction” (Lefebvre 12). The characteristics that he attributes to the category ‘space’ remain inseparable from a particular narrative of space and from notions of occupation and ownership. His argument depicts the links between space and social relations. Due to that crucial link, logically one could deduce that different social groups would define space differently; therefore, the fictional narratives created by Native American authors, which rely on tribal traditions and values as well as dominant cultural practices, offer a different perspective of space.

The concept of space within an Euroamerican context emerges out of a climate informed by the invaders’ “static perception of the world” (Freire 159). As a product of a western worldview, the narrative of space as territory has developed into a tool that dominant social group uses to implement “cultural invasion” (Freire 159). It exists within the context of a specific theoretical debate; however, over time the limited applicability of the term has been forgotten, and it has become “lost in scientific abstractions and mired in a logic of identity... ‘unaware of the real element from which forces, their qualities and their relations derive’ and is blind to ‘the far more subtle and subterranean differential mechanisms’ [(Deleuze 157)] that constitutes reality”⁵⁵. The category of space, when defined by “[w]estern cultural traditions” (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3)

⁵³ David Harvey, “Afterward,” *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1991), 427.

⁵⁴ To illustrate the similarities between the different theories of space and to avoid reducing his discussion of absolute and social space to an argument founded on dualistic principles, he borrows “the term ‘formant’ from the study of musical sounds. Triadic rather than bipolar, the formants’ components ‘imply one another and conceal one another” (Westfall 347). Carroll William Westfall, rev. of *The Production of Space*, by Henri Lefebvre, *Journal of Modern History* 66.2 (1994): 346-48.

⁵⁵ Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory* (London: The MacMillan P Ltd., 1991) 81.

exists as an abstract concept constructed to explain a particular perception of reality; however, people that perceive space through a western cultural lens have forgotten the “cultural constructedness”⁵⁶ of their narrative of space: they believe that their narrative *is* reality.

Spatial theory has become an integral part of defining ourselves, our reality, and our⁵⁷ position in society through “the illusion of transparency...a transcendental illusion...by...referring back immediately to other traps—traps which are its alibis, its masks” (Lefebvre 29); however, perceptions of spatiality and space differ from culture to culture. Spatial theory, however, masks its origins in western theory and presents itself as reality. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann’s “discussion of *modality*” illustrates how we mask “our human production of ‘reality’”⁵⁸. They discuss the tendency of human constructs to hide and deny the process of invention:

Reification is the apprehension of the products of human activity as if they were something else than human products...Reification implies that man is capable of forgetting his own authorship of the human world...⁵⁹

As human and cultural constructs, various narratives of space tend to hide their invention and become ‘reality’. A worldview tied to western traditions and thought remains largely based on a perception that this definition of space is reality rather than a construction. By “forgetting his own authorship” (Berger and Luckmann 89) of reality, this narrative of space is guilty of “Reification” (Berger and Luckmann 89). Dominant culture in the United States has forgotten that their narrative of space exists as a product of western thought, and that it fails to constitute American Indians’ perceptions of reality prior to the colonization of Native America. However, Native American authors clearly depict the link between their narrative of space and their tribal traditions and values.

Western forms of theory, and by extension the narrative of space that stems from those theories, has lost “sight of its own conditional nature, takes no risk in speculation, and circulates as a form of administrative inquisition,” and in this way space, as a product of theory, “oppresses” because “it wills or perpetuates existing power relations” and “it presents itself as a means to exert authority”⁶⁰. It acts as a divisive and exclusionary tool used to dominate and claim, and the danger rests in the concept’s apparent immunity from analysis of its own conditional existence. Far from representing Native Americans’ social relations, the dominant discourse of space owes its existence to the “shared...common experiences of their [European] peoples...[who] dwelt within the world view which had dominated western Europe for over a millenium” (Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins* 11). Space emerges out of, and serves to legitimate, a specific worldview. A narrative of space as territory perpetuates and condones the Euroamerican destructive inclination to divide and conquer. Indeed, I

⁵⁶ Werner Sollors, “Introduction: The Invention of Ethnicity,” *The Invention of Ethnicity*, ed. Werner Sollors (Oxford, Oxford UP, 1989) x.

⁵⁷ The capitalization of *Our* and *Ourselves* here refers to the collective values that define the dominant worldview in the United States.

⁵⁸ Gloria Bird, “Searching for Evidence of Colonialism at Work: A Reading of Louis [sic] Erdrich’s ‘Tracks,’” *The Wicazo-Sa Review* 8.2 (1992): 41.

⁵⁹ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Doubleday, 1967) 89.

⁶⁰ Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other* (Bloomington: Indian UP, 1989) 42.

would argue that the definition attributed to space by western thought has become synonymous with the unknown and the conquerable.

A narrative of space based upon western cultural beliefs sets up a dichotomy between empty and occupied space, and a desire for structure that manifests itself in the binary opposites through which structuralism defines itself: nature/culture, female/male, good/evil. The postmodern project to "[denaturalize] constructs like 'object' or 'self' or 'history'"⁶¹ succeeds in deconstructing the binaries that Structuralists rely on; however, although postmodernism succeeds in a "collapse of the dualisms that have served modernist hegemony and its forms of transcendence" (Ermarth 7), and questions "Western discourse" and "its obsession with power and knowledge" (Ermarth 6) that has led to the invention of the "conventions of space and time" (Ermarth 21-2), postmodernism fails to reach the conclusion that narratives of space remain culturally determined constructs. Although "It now appears that we have constructed society, The Market, and The System and are solely responsible for them" (Ermarth 164), space remains reality rather than as construction.

The Native American authors discussed in the thesis question the universal applicability of "[w]estern cultural traditions" (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3) and practices, particularly the narratives created to explain space, through the inclusion of "ethnic signs and nonwestern worldviews" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* 10) in their contemporary fiction. Theory, as a discipline, has positioned itself as the science of Literature; therefore, one can apply Trinh T. Minh-ha's criticism of science and its anthropologists to the notion of theory, and by extension to the narrative of space that emerges out of theory. The dangers of anthropology exist within the belief that the professional erases his biases and own cultural discourses to provide an unbiased view of an 'other' culture predicated on scientific knowledge (Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other* 48). The notions of spatial theory⁶² rely on a similar methodology of abstraction that allows them to write over 'other' experience. Just as Trinh T. Minh-ha's cultural 'other' (Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other* 52) represents lack and justifies cultural superiority, spatial theory too is used as a tool to assert domination over an apparent lack. Lack implies a void: emptiness. The belief that *Woman* symbolizes lack allows for the oppression and the silencing of women; likewise, the view that space signifies lack allows for the oppression of Native America through a discourse of dominance and ownership. The belief in space as lack provides the frameworks behind colonialism and the European policy of discovery⁶³. Daniel Cornell states that lack is "the negation of what is"⁶⁴. Lack, because it negates, leads to acquisition, and the philosophies of Manifest Destiny and "[d]iscovery negated the

⁶¹ Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, *Sequel to History: Postmodernism and the Crisis of Representational Time* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1992) 163.

⁶² My discussion concerning theoretical discourse in this thesis borrows from Trinh T. Minh-ha's debate about theory as "an occupied territory" that "presents itself as a means to exert authority—the Voice of Knowledge" (Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other* 42). The dominant culture privileges theory due to its links to scientific knowledge, and this privilege serves to oppress and exclude those who do not engage in theory.

⁶³ Vine Deloria Jr. believes that "After the Revolution the new United States adopted the doctrine of discovery and continued the process of land acquisition...either by purchase or conquest" (Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins* 31).

⁶⁴ Daniel Cornell, "Women Looking: Revis(ion)ing Pauline's Subject Position in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 4.1 (Spring 1992): 52.

rights of the Indian tribes to sovereignty and equality...It took away their title to their land" (Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins* 30). In dominant western discourse, space has become something to occupy and acquire.

Lack also alludes to a failure to meet certain criteria. The dominant discourse, through its laws and social mores, enforces certain beliefs and standards of behavior that define 'normality'. Cultures and people that fail to measure up to those standards *lack* access to power because they fail to perpetuate the beliefs that determine, and are determined by, the laws and mores of the majority. Spatial theory justifies domination over a perceived lack. The artificial boundaries that characterize western narratives of space excuse domination and occupation of land, people, and 'other' social groups by excluding those who fail to *occupy* space in an *acceptable* manner. The General Allotment Act discussed earlier in this introduction best illustrates the U.S. government's view of Native Americans as *lacking* the ability to use the land properly. This act "allowed the secretary of the interior to lease the lands of any allottee who... 'by reason of age or other disability' could not 'personally...*occupy or improve* his allotment [emphasis added]" (Deloria and Lytle 10). The invaders' rigid worldview produces the criteria that determine the 'proper use' of the land. The supposition that people can improve land through occupation and acquisition emerges out of a climate influenced by the Enlightenment belief in linear progress, and the belief in land as a wilderness that humans have an inherent right to tame, dominate, and improve. Linda Hogan incorporates this aspect of Native American history in her novel *Mean Spirit*. Her character Belle Graycloud left "the land lying idle" and failed to "improve" it⁶⁵, and so the government confiscated it as pasture land.

A belief in a narrative of space as territory results in attempts to control and define 'other' social relations and negotiations through a rationalization of occupying lack. Henri Lefebvre argues that "Any 'social existence' aspiring or claiming to be 'real', but failing to produce its own space... would fall to the level of folklore and sooner or later disappear altogether, thereby immediately losing its identity, its denomination and its feeble degree of reality" (Lefebvre 53). His perspective, stemming from a western worldview, remains predicated on a specific narrative of space. This narrative seems to relegate the narrative of space advocated by Native American authors to folklore due to his claims that the properties that he believes characterize space and the properties that characterize nature remain incompatible. Lefebvre depicts a troubled relationship between space and nature. He claims that "It is becoming impossible to escape the notion that nature is being murdered...by abstraction, by signs and images, by discourse" (Lefebvre 71). The very conventions that characterize the dominant social group's narrative of space are rendering nature and its laws obsolete *to that social group*. Instead, the authors situate the tribal relations⁶⁶ of their fictional characters within tribal contexts that remain intricately linked to nature. Lefebvre's 'space' reflects the characteristics of one particular narrative, but he fails to recognize and consider the existence of different perceptions of space. Due to his limited definition of space that discounts narratives of space

⁶⁵ Linda Hogan, *Mean Spirit* (New York: Ivy Books, 1990) 213.

⁶⁶ To distinguish between social relations influenced by western definitions of space and the American Indian authors' illustrations of social relations influenced by narratives of space based upon the characteristics with which they depict nature, I will refer to Native American social relations as tribal relations.

with links to nature, he fails to account for the narratives of space proposed by the contemporary American Indian authors discussed in this thesis. They fail to produce 'space' according to his criteria.

Kathleen Kirby examines the precepts behind creating spaces through mapping. In her discussion of a "[c]artesian 'mapping' subject" (Duncan 6), a concept discussed in further detail later in the chapter, she claims, in her examination for "new styles of space"⁶⁷, that "[t]he space that mapping propagates is an immutable space organized by invariable boundaries, an a-temporal, objective, transparent space" and relies on boundaries "patterned as a constant barricade enforcing the difference between the two sites" (47). Her analysis of mapping and space reinforces the objections that most American Indian authors voice concerning spatial theory. Kirby examines the practice of mapping. She views "[m]apping space as a signifier of control" (Duncan 6). In her argument, she deliberately illustrates the links between mapping, boundaries, and control. She acknowledges that space and its boundaries act as barriers. The widely accepted belief in a narrative of space as mappable territory perpetuates the creation of 'spaces' conceived out of boundaries.

American Indian authors attempt to destabilize these spaces because the introduction of spatialized systems and institutions, constructed by "[w]estern cultural traditions" (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3), into Native America has negatively affected American Indian tribes. Kirby argues for "eradicating, radically, the ordering lines of our culture, and our selves" (55) through a questioning of space as a narrative of mappable territory. She recognizes the need for transformative thinking, and she suggests that a move away from the perception of space as mappable might come from people excluded by that particular perception of space. Speaking of space and the "mapping subject" (Kirby 46), she claims "that it is an exclusive structure encoded with a particular gender, class and racial positioning; that it is a structure...unresponsive to the perspectives of many non-dominant subjectivities" (Kirby 46). As a narrative of dominance, or "control" (Duncan 6), space, when characterized as territory, excludes those who fail to conform to the "norm's claim to exhaustively represent subjects...where it has hardened into reality" (Kirby 45). It excludes 'other' subjectivities.

Recently, a race for space has permeated academia. Departments and disciplines within academia vie for space to "measure off and stake out...territory"⁶⁸. Divisions such as "bodyspace" masculine space, feminine space, and third space" have emerged and ownership of these spaces results in knowledge and, by extension, power. Dominant theories of space argue about masculine and feminized space versus female space or ethnic space. The theorists try to posit, from the privileged position that theory holds within academia, ways of 'knowing' the space(s) that we inhabit. Already these theories fail to recognize that they are constrained by a set of assumptions based on a scientific

⁶⁷ Kathleen M. Kirby, "RE: Mapping Subjectivity: Cartographic Vision and the Limits of Politics," *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*, ed. Nancy Duncan (New York: Routledge, 1996) 46.

⁶⁸ Ruth Salvaggio, "Theory and Space, Space and Woman," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 7.1 (1988): 263.

way of 'knowing'⁶⁹. Academia itself consists of separate departments that attempt to cordon off a particular subject by studying it in exclusion from other disciplines, and oftentimes without acknowledging its narrow approach and constraints. Space, as defined by the dominant culture in the U.S. has become an abstract territory to own, dominate, and occupy. Kirby questions this narrative of space, its effect on social relations, and claims that "more responsive forms of social relation[s]" exist (45):

There may prove to be, then, different forms of relating to space than that implied by mapping, ones that continue to be practiced today by those people who literally cannot afford to separate themselves from the ground: the indigenous, the indigent... Mapping—theoretical or scientific—excludes these subjectively variable perspectives on epistemology, but more importantly, it ignores the variability of subjective structures. (Kirby 54)

She questions mapping as an exclusionary practice and recognizes that 'other' perspectives of reality exist. Her critique of mapping closely mirrors the critique of the authors included in this thesis. The dominant discourse in the U.S. and its institutions are products of the same worldview responsible for constructing spatial theories and boundaries; therefore, dominant 'social relations' and institutions are perceived and configured through boundaries and abstractions from their conception. Alternatively, Native American written works illustrate Native American social relations, which, due to their different perspective of space, resist the type of spatial configuration that marks the dominant culture's social relations.

Re-Appropriating Context: Re-Stitching Social Relations to a Tribal Context

American Indian authors' resistance to space as territory, and the subsequent creation of boundaries, alters their readers' perceptions of social relations, which in turn causes them to question and revise their preconceived notions concerning a variety of subjects. The writers unsettle notions such as individualism, postmodernism⁷⁰, theory, literature, language, writing, and nature through their fictional representations and disordering of those categories. Their project involves much more than

⁶⁹ Science seeks to separate and label specimens, or small segments, of an entity in an effort to control and obtain knowledge. Academia adopts this scientific methodology of separating and labeling different areas of study in the same quest for knowledge.

⁷⁰ Leslie Marmon Silko criticized, what she viewed as, Louise Erdrich's postmodern style of writing. Susan Castillo examines Silko's position and claims that Silko's "critique of Erdrich stems from a genuine concern about issues related to postmodern fiction and its relation to the real which are of great relevance in the interpretation of Native American texts." Susan Castillo, "Postmodernism, Native American Literature and the Real: The Silko-Erdrich Controversy," *The Massachusetts Review* 32.2 (1991): 285. Silko, according to Castillo believes that "postmodern fiction" plays a role in "the creation of an alienated reality" ("Postmodernism, Native American Literature and the Real" 290). Silko's concerns reflect a valid misgiving relating to the issue of western theory and practices and how they relate, if they relate, to Native American experiences and narratives.

mere attempts to disrupt certain beliefs held by the dominant culture of the United States. This thesis will illustrate the *literary tools* that they employ to re-stitch the damage done by the fragmentation and de-contextualization that has resulted from “cultural invasion” (Freire 159).

Arguably, spatial theories, in their attempts to explain social reality, reflect the view of ownership and property that influences the institution of colonization. Ruth Salvaggio’s article “Theory and Space, Space and Woman” explores and analyzes theories of space that she terms “masculine” and “feminized”. She outlines the history of theory through her critique of previous spatial theories. She argues that “formalism, modernism, and phenomenology...each of these literary theories shares...a type of spatial identity, a configuration of itself expressed in terms of some spatial form or concept that reflects certain values” (Salvaggio 265). By briefly discussing the core thoughts behind each theoretical period, she criticizes the hierarchical and exclusive characteristics of modernist, or “masculine space” (Salvaggio 262) and the postmodern feminization of space that occurred due to the development of theoretical approaches to literature.

While her arguments focus on women’s concerns, one can apply her critique of spatial theory to Native American concerns as well. She argues that the change in perspective from hierarchical and enclosed masculine space to fragmented and non-cohesive feminized space still has little to do with female concerns. Certain theories’ attempts to map “the territory that literary discourse might legitimately be said to occupy” (Salvaggio 263) reflect attempts to cordon off, separate, and label space into “knowable” chunks. Salvaggio believes that these theories of space have nothing or little to offer female writers, and women “hardly seem to be seeking theory at all, as if it were too much of the order of man, language, and defined space” (Salvaggio 278). Native American writers, like women writers, resist the constraints imposed by spatial theory, and begin “spacing themselves elsewhere” (Salvaggio 278) and the rules and hierarchical structures that define theory become less applicable to their writing. According to Salvaggio, women writers should write their experiences, and these experiences naturally lead them away from theory, and allow women to “liquify” (Salvaggio 276) the boundaries. Indian American writers’ move towards experience based on tribal context and insight allows them to dissolve the boundaries created by a narrative of space as territory, like Salvaggio’s women writers, and move away from spatial theories.

Previously in the introduction, I argued, borrowing from Catherine Rainwater, that Native American written works differ from postmodern narratives. The analysis of Native American writers and their works in this thesis will attempt to illustrate these differences. Although some Native American writers embrace the postmodern project to celebrate plurality and to problematize social binaries and structuralist thinking, Native American narratives differ from postmodern narratives in a few significant areas. Like postmodern narratives, Native American works deconstruct and destabilize many accepted social practices and beliefs engaged in by the dominant social group; however, Native American authors try to reconfigure the fragments by providing context. They too celebrate plurality and difference and question the rigidity found in structuralist thinking, but their ability to incorporate their tribal beliefs and traditions into their social experience allows them to envision something more than mere fragmentation.

Gerald Vizenor endorses comparisons between postmodern theory and Native American written narratives. He claims, rightfully, that “The narrow teleologies...that arise from structuralism

have reduced tribal literatures to an 'objective' collection of consumable cultural artifacts"⁷¹. He believes that most criticism of Native American writings relies on modernist and structuralist thought that negatively affects their written narratives, and he therefore advocates postmodern readings of the authors' works. Vizenor insists that "Postmodernism liberates imagination and widens the audiences for tribal literatures" (Vizenor, "A Postmodern Introduction" 6). Despite the positive influence that postmodernism has on modernist structures and suppositions, I believe that it curtails Native American innovations by constraining them within a theoretical framework based solely on western thinking. By labeling American Indian narratives as postmodern, Vizenor restricts the Native American authors' perspectives and imagination within the boundaries of postmodern theory.

Even the title of his collection, *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures* reflects the restrictions that applying postmodern theory has on Native American writings. The title implies the imposition of postmodern theory *onto* American Indian narratives, rather than the emergence of analysis from the narratives. Vizenor's assertion that "Native American Indian literatures have been pressed into cultural categories transmuted by reductionism, animadversion and hyper-realities of neocolonial consumerism" (Vizenor, "A Postmodern Introduction" 5) also pertains to the application of postmodern discourse to American Indian written works. His claim that American Indian written narratives are postmodern discourses limits and reduces "[c]ontemporary Native American novelists' contribution toward a definition of American society"⁷². He restricts the writers' creative expression to the confines of western thought when in fact, while containing elements of western cultural practices, their fiction also includes aspects of various tribal cultures resistant to western theories.

American Indian written works do not model themselves exclusively after postmodern discourse in that they contain elements of traditions that remain integral to their tribal contexts, nor do they reflect modernist characteristics. Michel Foucault, in his deconstruction of "unities"⁷³ discusses tradition:

we must rid ourselves of a whole mass of notions....Take the notion of tradition: it is intended to give a special temporal status to a group of phenomena...It allows a reduction of the difference...in order to pursue without discontinuity the endless search for the origin; tradition allows us to isolate the new against a background of permanence. (21)

He views tradition as a rigid, fixed, and unified notion. Postmodernists seek to deconstruct "unities" (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* 21) because they present an illusion of wholeness, completeness, and transcendence. I believe that tradition, when perceived within a tribal context, does not exhibit any of the aforementioned characteristics. American Indian novelists depict a 'living' tradition that remains mutable and fluid rather than fixed within a specific temporal moment. In addition, because tradition exists within, and relies upon, a tribal context, unless it becomes abstracted

⁷¹ Gerald Vizenor, "A Postmodern Introduction," *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*, ed. Gerald Vizenor (London: U of Oklahoma P, 1993) 5-6.

⁷² Richard F. Fleck, "Introduction," *Critical Perspectives on Native American Fiction*, ed. Richard F. Fleck (Pueblo, CO.: Passeggiata P, 1997) 3.

⁷³ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972) 21.

from that context, it does not create an illusion of unity. Alan Velie and Gerald Vizenor discuss the importance of tradition to contemporary Native Americans and advocate Deloria's perception of tradition:

The reaffirmation of traditional beliefs is necessary to encourage and empower Indians who have been told that their ancestors were barbaric pagans. But, Deloria realizes that traditions are *living things*, and that Indians cannot simply dress in beads and feathers and live as if it were still 1850—something that many whites as well as Indians believe appropriate behavior [emphasis added]⁷⁴.

Many contemporary American Indian authors depict traditions as “living things” (Velie and Vizenor 3), and use their books to illustrate how their traditions have adapted alongside their experiences to create a tribal context that remains in continual flux. Traditions do not exist as self-contained wholes because they remain tied to experience, innovation, and tribal contexts. Within American Indian novels, traditions incorporate and inform the experiences of the characters and therefore adapt to those experiences. In this manner, traditions remain innovative and fluid rather than fixed and rigid. Nor do traditions “isolate the new” (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* 21), because they instead *incorporate* new experiences and perceptions that include aspects of various western cultures and tribal cultures.

Instead of existing as a unity, American Indian traditions are best described as continua because they illustrate the way that experiences shade into each other. A continuum, rather than advocating a hierarchical spatial framework that separates experiences from their contexts, reveals the breadth and depth of experiences and the relations that illustrate how they inform each other⁷⁵. Tribal traditions are ‘living’ continuations and extensions of the people and environments that shape them. Only when traditions and experiences are separated from their contexts does they become “an empty abstraction”, as “Space considered in isolation is an empty abstraction” (Lefebvre 12). For example, storytelling plays an important part in Laguna Pueblo traditions. Storytelling is “something that comes out of an experience and an understanding of that original view of Creation—that we are all part of a whole; we do not differentiate or fragment stories and experiences” (Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 50). Silko's quotation illuminates the resistance that her stories, and her contemporaries' stories, have to abstraction. American Indian writers' rejection of spatial theories that lead to abstraction affects their perceptions and therefore affects their experiences. Both the continuum of tradition and Kimberly Blaeser's “consciousness of historical continuum” are “sounded in the voice of native writers” (qtd. in Velie and Vizenor 3). Because they incorporate their experiences into their traditions, into their tribal contexts, and into their written narratives, their traditions *continue* to inform, retroactively and proactively, their perceptions of past, present, and future events.

According to their fiction, Native Americans' social relations remain embedded within various tribal perspectives of space rather than western spatial narratives. This tribal context emerges out of tribes' traditional and continued relationships with nature and the “more intimate relationships

⁷⁴ Alan R. Velie and Gerald Vizenor, “Introduction,” *Native American Perspectives on Literature and History*, ed. Alan R. Velie (London: U of Oklahoma P, 1994) 3.

⁷⁵ These ideas emerged out of a discussion with Susanne Ottenheimer in June of 1998.

with animals" that inform "old tribal intelligence", and "tribal knowledge"⁷⁶. In their fiction, Native American authors create social relations that reflect the characteristics of nature and its laws, rather than spatial properties based upon abstraction and division, through their illustration of the inseparable and intimate bond between Native American experience and nature. The authors often link their *fictional* tribal contexts to nature. They use nature to destabilize the social, cultural, and physical boundaries that delimit "contemporary reality" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* ix). Their use of nature and the characteristics that they attribute to nature should not be viewed as nostalgia for the past or for an idealistic and 'primitive' longing for 'pure' nature: a narrative of nature that more accurately reflects an Euroamerican view of nature as separate from human endeavor. Nature, in their fiction, exists as a literary and illustrative tool.

In their narratives, Gerald Vizenor and Louise Erdrich both illustrate that this connection with nature also pertains to American Indians living in urban settings. In Louise Erdrich's newest novel *The Antelope Wife*⁷⁷, one of her characters hears trickster stories through his dialogues with a dog that has ties to both a reservation and a city. Despite his continued drunken stupor, her character maintains his ties to animals, and therefore to nature, through his connection with the dog. Gerald Vizenor's book *Dead Voices* remains the best example of the continued connection between urban Native Americans and the natural environment. His character, the bear woman named Bagese, knew "much of the natural world"⁷⁸ even though she lived in Oakland, California. The narrator of Bagese's stories relates her transformations into various animals. Bagese claims that "bears at last found a new wilderness in the city" (*Dead Voices* 10). To believe that cities remain separate from nature and its laws, is to fall victim to a belief that spaces created by artificial boundaries, cities, can exist separately from the natural world: a worldview that perpetuates abstraction and views the natural laws as separate from human endeavors. Bagese plays a card game that ensures her link to the natural world:

The player arises at dawn, turns one of the seven cards, meditates on the picture, and imagines he has become the animal, bird, or insect on the card for the day. Then stories are told about the picture and the plural pronoun *we* is used to be sure nature is not separated from humans and the wanaki game. (*Dead Voices* 28)

As Bagese plays the game, she becomes each of the seven animals depicted on the wanaki cards. She collectively becomes the urban animals: bears, fleas, squirrels, mantis, crows, beavers, and tricksters. Through her transformations, she learns the animals' urban stories and lives as that particular animal. Her stories illustrate the fact that cities do not exist as separate from the natural world. She claims that "[t]he cities became our sanctuaries, and we were closer to the natural world in our stories" (*Dead Voices* 133). Vizenor's story seems to suggest that stories, not place, influence the connection between nature and American Indian social relations; therefore, urban American Indians can still remain connected to nature and its characteristics through stories.

⁷⁶ Linda Hogan, Deena Metzger and Brenda Peterson, "Introduction," *Intimate Nature: The Bond Between Women and Animals*, eds. Linda Hogan, Deena Metzger and Brenda Peterson (New York: The Ballantine Publishing Group, 1998) xii.

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⁷⁸ Gerald Vizenor, *Dead Voices* (London: U of Oklahoma P, 1992) 9.

In the fiction examined in this thesis, the social relations of the characters occur within tribal contexts that remain intricately linked to nature. The authors use nature as a literary tool to disorder the boundaries created by a narrative of space that emerges out of “[w]estern cultural traditions” (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3). William Bevis postulates that “Native American nature is urban....meaning at the center of action and power, in complex and unpredictable and various relationships”⁷⁹. In their fiction, the authors link their tribal customs and narratives of space to their characters’ observations of nature. Conversely, ‘urban’ to most Americans refers to cities spatially constructed through the creation of artificial boundaries, while nature refers to the opposite of civilization. Their “parochial view of reality” (Freire 159) has influenced their perception of their relationship to nature: “Europeans have long assumed a serious split between man and nature” (Bevis 31). This split informs a worldview that perceives nature as wilderness. For American Indian authors, “[n]ature is part of tribe” (Bevis 31); therefore, their stories and their tribal relations preserve their links to nature and reject spatial analysis based on western narratives of space.

This distinction between nature’s role for most non-Natives and for Native America epitomizes the gap between embedding social relations in spatial theory or tribal narratives of space. Vine Deloria Jr. encapsulates the difference between Native America’s worldview and a Euroamerican worldview in a few sentences. He believes that “[i]nherent in the very definition of ‘wilderness’ is contained the gulf between understandings of the two cultures. Indians do not see the natural world as a wilderness”⁸⁰. One culture perceives nature as spatially separate from human existence: it symbolizes a wilderness untouched by human intervention while civilization exists as a purely human invention, according to a western worldview. Lefebvre believes that “Nature is also becoming lost....How can we form a picture of it as it was before the intervention of humans with their ravaging tools? Even the powerful myth of nature is being transformed into a mere fiction, a negative utopia” (Lefebvre 31). This statement encapsulates the attitude that Deloria criticizes. According to Lefebvre, Native American experiences and social relations, because of their ties to nature, fail to produce space and have been relegated to myth, fiction, and folklore. He argues that “The more a space partakes of nature, the less it enters into the social relations of production” (Lefebvre 83). American Indian tribal beliefs perceive tribal existence and nature as spatially inseparable: both affect the survival of the other. In their literature, the more American Indians’ social relations participate with nature within a tribal context, the less western forms of spatial theory apply to their experiences. M. Jane Young states that:

Native American quality of seeing is based on ‘a polysynthetic metaphysic of nature, immediately experienced rather than dangerously abstracted’....*Place* in this sense extends, of course, to outer space, or Father Sky, as well as to Mother Earth. This perspective contrasts sharply with that of enthusiasts of space

⁷⁹ William Bevis, “Native American Novels: Homing In,” *Critical Perspectives on Native American Fiction*, ed. Richard F. Fleck (Pueblo, CO.: Passeggiata P, 1997): 31.

⁸⁰ Vine Deloria Jr., “Trouble in High Places: Erosion of American Indian Rights to Religious Freedom in the United States,” *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston: South End P, 1992) 281.

explorations who regard space as something 'out there' beyond everyday experience⁸¹.

In Native American fiction, the authors create American Indian worldviews that resist abstraction due to their links to nature. Authors of American Indian ethnicity recognize that people exist, not apart from, but as a part of nature and space. Conversely, many people view space as something "out there" (Young 271) to possess and explore. Because Native Americans' social relations occur within a tribal context, western theories concerning space fail to explain their experiences.

The predilection of many Euroamericans to privilege space over nature informs their perspective of reality. One character in a Native American novel asks the question that dominates Indian written narratives as they seek to reconfigure reality within a tribal context. The character asks if it would "have been a different world if someone had believed our [Native American] lives were as important as theory"⁸². American Indian writers use their written narratives to reconfigure and re-imag(in)e the bonds and relations that intimately inform their tribal relations and traditions. They adopt aspects of their oral traditions into their written works so that their "storytelling helps maintain tribal identity along with social and cosmic harmony, it emphasizes solidarity over power" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* 8) and contributes to reconfiguring and re-imag(in)ing Native American experiences. American Indian novelists use their characters, their experiences, their perspectives, languages, writing, and their resistance to space to dissolve the spatial barriers and stereotypes that bind American Indians. Like Salvaggio, they take issue with the structuralist assertion that "language itself could be spatialized into a system" and that "Literature and language remained bounded entities" (Salvaggio 266). Their novels question the systemization and regulation of the literary discipline and language, and they further demolish the impenetrable boundaries that surround the literary discipline and western theories of space. Through the act of writing, and the power of language, the writers illustrate dynamic relationships that challenge the privileging of abstract theories of space. Speaking and writing stories remain crucial to Native American authors' attempts to reconfigure social relations because "Story is a power that describes our world, our human being, sets out the rules and intricate laws of human beings in relationship with all the rest"⁸³. The stories reflect tribal worldviews and the tribal members' relationships to each other, to nature, and to other social groups.

American Indian authors seek to alter the belief that language and writing are strictly adhered to systems that create elitist barriers. Writing acts as a fitting medium for their perspectives because Literature has been "[d]isplaced from the center to the margins of culture—a move that may in fact be inevitable in the information society"⁸⁴, and because of this shift non-canonized ethnic works have been able to penetrate a previously elitist field. According to William Paulson, the current obsession

⁸¹ M. Jane Young, "'Pity the Indians of Outer Space': Native American Views of the Space Program," *Western Folklore* 46.4 (1987): 271.

⁸² Linda Hogan, *Power* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1998) 179.

⁸³ Linda Hogan, "First People," *Intimate Nature: The Bond Between Women and Animals*, eds. Linda Hogan, Deena Metzger, and Brenda Peterson (New York: The Ballantine Publishing Group, 1998) 9.

⁸⁴ William R. Paulson, *The Noise of Culture: Literary Texts in a World of Information* (London: Cornell UP, 1988) viii.

with scientific knowledge has moved Literature from its position within academia as a purveyor of Truth. This recent shift has enabled ethnic authors to enter the previously elitist field of study, and their works offer innovative perspectives and new philosophies. In addition, books act as a good example of attempts to categorize and impose artificial boundaries on written works. According to Michel Foucault, a book "is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network" (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* 23). Books fail to remain within their bounds and they bleed out onto the very covers that are meant to contain them: the title and the author are placed outside of the book, to entice readers the publisher places flattering synopses of the book on the back cover, other authors comments are included on the covers, etc. After the publication of the book, a stream of criticism issues forth creating a micro-system of writing that cannot remain autonomous or bound.

American Indian writers differentiate their writing from more conventional forms by linking their novels to the oral tradition "in which the word and the object are equal and in which all things are united and in flux....The life of the word and the fusion of the words and object, by means of visual imagination, return the participant or reader to an original source that is mythic"⁸⁵. Their use of words originates not through an inherent meaning or a lack of meaning, but through the act of imagination and the fusion between the word and meaning that characterizes spoken language. Gerald Vizenor states that "The printed word has no evolution in tribal literatures; the word is there, in trees, water, air and printed on paper where it has been at all times" (Vizenor, "Preface" x). Like tradition, tribal knowledge, and oral storytelling, to American Indian authors, their words, language, and by extension their "tribal literatures" (Vizenor, "Preface" x) remain within a tribal context and resist abstraction. Their written works are a continuation of the American Indians' oral tradition, which is "a living body. It is in continuous flux, which enables it to accommodate itself to the real circumstances of a people's lives" (Allen, *The Sacred Hoop* 224). Rather than accepting the dominant view of writing and language as oppressive tools used to rigidly control and dominate space—this only occurs if one accepts the view of writing as static—Native American novelists portray writing as liberation from spatial boundaries. Their characters often write their way around social and physical barriers, and their works become modern adaptations of the American Indian oral 'living' tradition and remain inseparable from the American Indian worldview.

Native American fiction also addresses the predilection within "[w]estern cultural traditions" (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3) to privilege the 'individual'. For example, in the seventeenth century, the concept of an 'individual' exists as a product of spatially configuring reality. Don Wayne, in his discussion of Ben Jonson's poem *Penshurst*, discusses the advent of the 'individual':

There is some linguistic evidence that in the sixteenth century, if not earlier, the self began to be thought of in territorial and possessive terms. A shift can be detected away from the idea of

⁸⁵ Linda Hogan, "Who Puts Together," *Studies in American Indian Literature: Critical Essays and Course Designs*, ed. Paula Allen (New York: Modern Language Association, 1983) 175-6.

subjectivity as a quality shared by members of a community to a notion that located the subject *in* the individual⁸⁶.

Wayne's discussion of the 'individual' illustrates two points that link the notion of an 'individual' with a narrative of space as territory. He refers to the 'individual' as a territory and in terms of possession: interconnected and exchangeable concepts. Both descriptions reflect the characteristics of the dominant discourse of space. Secondly, he discusses the move of subjectivity from "a community" to an individual (23). As discussed earlier, the spatial boundaries that demarcate a given territory serve to abstract people from their context; therefore, the advent of spatial theory gave rise to the notion of the individual.

Due to colonial activities, western European categories such as identity and individualism have infiltrated the contexts of 'other' ethnic groups. Ethnic literatures address these concerns by challenging the links between identity, the individual subject, and power; portraying these categories as western constructs; and by unsettling the supposition that, as Rivkin and Ryan suggest, "such things as...identities" exist⁸⁷. According to Trinh T. Minh-ha, western institutions and the construct 'identity' emerge out of the same worldview that legitimizes domination and colonization:

Identity...[is] understood in the context of a certain ideology of dominance...[and] relies on the concept of an essential, authentic core...that requires the elimination of all that is...other⁸⁸.

As constructs of the same worldview, categories such as identity and individualism have perpetuated the domination over the cultural 'other'. Native American written narratives resist the authority of reductive categories that stem from "[w]estern cultural traditions" (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3).

Kathleen Kirby also criticizes, what she calls, "The Cartesian subject" (45). She links this subject to the "Enlightenment individual" and to "the atrocities of imperialism, the subjugation of women and the psychological illnesses of Western individuals" (Kirby 45). As she questions the construction of the individual, she also queries the practice of mapping space. Kirby claims that "individualism was—and continues to be—inextricably tied to a specific concept of space and the technologies invented for dealing with that space" (Kirby 45). In her essay, the concept refers to mapping space, or space as territory. She "[contends] that the mapping subject, now as then, is a construct incapable of responding to many of the features of the (geopolitical) environment" (Kirby 46). The authors included in this thesis write stories that illustrate the separation from environment, or nature, discussed by Kirby. Like Kirby, they also link the separation from environment with a narrative of space as a boundary-determined territory.

⁸⁶ Don E. Wayne, *Penshurst: The Semiotics of Place and the Poetics of History* (London: Methuen and Company Ltd., 1984) 23.

⁸⁷ Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, "English Without Shadows, Literature on a World Scale," *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1998) 853.

⁸⁸ Trinh T. Minh-ha, "Not You / Like You: Post-Colonial Women and the Interlocking Questions of Identity and Difference," *Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1990) 371.

Kirby describes the characteristics of the individual as a whole. She explains the individual subject using Cartesian terminology:

Graphically, the 'individual' might be pictured as a closed circle: its smooth contours ensure its clear division from its location, as well as assuring its internal coherence and consistency. Outside lies a vacuum in which objects appear within their own bubbles, self-contained but largely irrelevant to this self-sufficient ego. Will, thought, perception might be depicted as rays issuing outward to play over the surface of Objects, finally rejecting them in order to reaffirm its own primacy. Objects that are accepted are pulled in through the walls of the subject and assimilated, restoring the interior to homeostasis. (Kirby 45)

Her description illustrates the exclusion of 'others' through barriers, or walls. She also describes the self-contained individual's perception of the 'space' surrounding it as a vacuum: as lack. Anything outside of the sphere 'lacks' relevance unless it becomes subsumed by the individual in an act of appropriation and then internalization. Again, Kirby's mapped subject demonstrates the characteristics of the dominant narrative of space.

In her discussion of "a European sensibility of the natural world", Kirby links "[t]his conception of space" to "the form of space increasingly underlying the concept of the 'individual'. Standardized 'Man', like mapping iconography, applied its own culturally specific standards" (Kirby 46). According to Kirby, the boundaries inherent in a narrative of space as territory also apply to the concept of the individual. As Lefebvre argued, space masks its own origins, and like space "[f]ormulating 'subject' as individual with pre-set boundaries, it fails to recognize the very conventionality of the individual boundary that it imposes" (Kirby 54). American Indian writers unsettle constructions of identity and individuality by re-contextualizing their characters' social relations within a tribal context. William Bevis believes that individualism has become a privileged narrative in the United States:

to white Americans, the individual is often the ultimate reality, that therefore individual consciousness is the medium, repository, and arbiter of knowledge, and that our 'freedom' can be hard to distinguish from isolation. (Bevis 22)

American Indian authors question the 'individual' as a privileged narrative, but in their disruption of a narrative of an individual, as an indivisible whole, they also subvert and reappropriate, through their novels, the notion of the individual within a tribal context. The belief "[t]hat an individual exists is not contested" (Bevis 23) in the novels. The novels instead problematize the belief that an individual, when created with the characteristics underpinning mappable space, assimilates its own definition, and becomes an indivisible and inseparable whole in and of itself. The exposure of the characters to various tribal contexts in Native American narratives serves to emphasize the difference between the western and American Indian perceptions of an individual. To Native Americans "the individual *alone* [emphasis added] has no meaning...the free individual without context is utterly lost" (Bevis 23). An individual's inseparability and indivisibility from its context, environment, relations, and cultural groups more accurately illustrates "the first assumption of tribalism...that the individual is completed only in relation to others" (Bevis 20). Defining self remains a culturally located and dynamic process. Werner Sollors, in his discussion of ethnicity, claims that "[t]he interpretation of previously 'essentialist' categories...as 'inventions' has resulted in the recognition of the general

cultural constructedness of the modern world" (x). As culturally determined, the perception of categories such as ethnicity, self, and individual vary from culture to culture. Their exposure to different tribal cultures allows American Indian authors to explore and 'invent' culturally distinct definitions for these categories. The novels discussed in this thesis re-stitch the 'individual' characters to the tribal context through the characters' relations, negotiations, and experiences.

Native American written narratives espouse new ways of re-imag(in)ing social relations by steeping them in traditions informed by their tribal contexts, and through writing they offer not only resistance against, but also a blueprint for changing and rethinking the status quo. Their books urge the reader to "step away from a worldview that, often, only sees the sacred in the abstract" (Hogan, Metzger, and Peterson xii). Native American authors incorporate non-western values and signs into their stories to encourage their readers to question their beliefs and values, and to allow their readers to re-imag(in)e social relations through a different spatial narrative shaped by tribal values and traditions. They educate their readers through the processes of reading and re-imag(in)ing, which exposes readers to a Native American worldview, and therefore to an alternate way of viewing and understanding social relations. James Ruppert argues that Native American authors question non-Native readers' deeply entrenched beliefs through the act of mediation: "[w]hile readers attempt to encode those phenomena that resist incorporation into their predisposed beliefs, the Native American writer offers reconstructed ways of encoding experience based on traditional and contemporary insight into both cultures" (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 11). The authors offer new ways of perceiving the world.

This thesis will explore the methods used by a select group of contemporary American Indian writers who have revised reality through their resistance to western spatial theories and by re-stitching their stories to a tribal framework, which allows them to offer new perceptions of social relations within a tribal context. Alan Velie and Gerald Vizenor claim that "In 1968 Scott Momaday published *House Made of Dawn*, beginning what has come to be known as "the American Indian Renaissance" (Velie and Vizenor 1). They believe that the American Indian writers that began to write after Momaday, "James Welch, Leslie Silko, Louise Erdrich" (Velie and Vizenor 2), and their contemporaries, have "spurred a body of criticism, mostly by white academics" that "have often been narrow and imperceptive. In most cases the critics simply applied western aesthetic standards to the works they discussed" (Velie and Vizenor 2). To counteract this genre of criticism, this thesis will focus on analysis that emerges out of the aforementioned authors' 'living' narratives; with the addition of Linda Hogan it will examine how each authors' works explode social and spatial barriers; and it will illustrate why the application of western thought to American Indian written narratives leads to a "narrow and imperceptive" (Velie and Vizenor 2) understanding of Native Americas' tribal relations.

Many American Indian authors have ties with different tribes, which provide each author with a unique viewpoint that stems from a particular, rather than pan-Indian tradition. For example, unlike most tribes, the Pueblo Indians to whom both Silko and Momaday have ties, "have always been able to stay with the land" (Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 58). The Pueblo Indians' continued ties to their traditional lands influence Silko's and Momaday's writing for their "stories cannot be separated from their geographical locations, from actual physical places on the land" (Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 58); the geography of the southwestern United States plays a

key role in their books. The Pueblos, unlike many other tribes, were not placed on reservations with traditional enemies: an issue shapes the events in James Welch's book *Winter in the Blood*⁸⁹ where his protagonist's grandmother discusses the move of the Blackfeet onto the Gros Ventre reservation and the strained relationship between the two tribes. The relationship that each author has to his/her tribe(s), as well as the specific history of those tribes, affects his/her experiences and therefore his/her stories. Silko's experiences and perception of reality remain shaped by her family's dynamics. Her "family was such a mixture of Indian, Mexican, and white" that she "was acutely aware of the inherent conflicts between Indian and white" (Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 17), and within her family "[t]here were branches...that, although Laguna, still felt they were better than the rest of us Marmons and the rest of the Lagunas as well" (Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 105). While Welch is a fullblood, Silko "was aware that...[she] was different....[She] didn't look quite like the other Laguna Pueblo children, but we didn't look quite white either" (Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 60); therefore, Silko's stories deal with issues concerning her multi-ethnic heritage while Welch does not experience the same struggles and so writes more about the alienation of American Indians from their tribes. These examples illustrate the complex issues and experiences that mold each author's stories. Each author utilizes different techniques and methods for altering reality by challenging spatial boundaries and incorporating stories into tribal frameworks; therefore, each chapter will explore the vision of only one or two authors. Due to word limitations, this thesis will not provide a comprehensive overview of all American Indian writers; however, it will attempt to provide a sample of authors that write beyond social boundaries and contest conventional perceptions of space.

⁸⁹ James Welch, *Winter in the Blood* (New York: Penguin Books, 1974).

Chapter 1: Linda Hogan's Tribal Imperative and Ritual Journeys

Linda Hogan's Tribal Imperative: Collapsing Spatial Boundaries through 'Living' Tribal Traditions and Nature

James Ruppert describes Native American writing as an act of "mediation" (Ruppert 8), and he argues that "it is more useful to see them [Native American writers] not as between two cultures (a romantic and victimist perspective) but as participants in two rich cultural traditions" (Ruppert 3). This act of mediation allows Native American authors to expose their readers to values and beliefs that differ from an Euroamerican worldview despite the fact that their stories are "[d]ialogically related to their western generic counterparts" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* xv). This chapter will examine the way in which Linda Hogan re-imag(in)es and "[revises] contemporary reality" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* ix) in her novels *Mean Spirit*, *Power*, and *Solar Storms* by collapsing spatial boundaries, through tribal traditions and their links to nature, and re-stitching stories to a tribal framework as part of a healing ceremony and a "world-healing telos" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* 37).

Mean Spirit focuses on a community of Indians living in an Oklahoma town called Watona, Talbert to the non-Native inhabitants and the official institutions, during the oil boom in Indian Territory. The novel, by following the Graycloud family's plight, deals with the inhabitants' struggle to survive social greed and values that clash with their own traditional values and beliefs. Her novel *Solar Storms* revolves around four generations of the females in Angel Wing's family and their struggles against the creation of artificial boundaries; in this case, dams. Hogan's newest novel, *Power*, follows a full-blood Taiga adolescent, named Omishto, as she experiences rebirth through storm, wind, story, and balance. Hogan uses these stories as a forum to re-imag(in)e Native American social relations.

In *Solar Storms*, Hogan portrays the Triangle's defiance of attempts to use maps to spatially chart and label an area in an effort to understand and measure space. She states that "Maps are only masks over the face of God"⁹⁰ and that "maps were not reliable" (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 122). Maps mimic the properties that shape spatial relationships in western discourse. Maps contain artificial

⁹⁰ Linda Hogan, *Solar Storms* (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1995) 138.

boundaries, divisions, measurements, and labels that seek to bind the dynamic relationships found in nature. Similarly, social conventions, predicated on an understanding of spatially constructed barriers, seek to bind a dynamic and 'living' Native American culture. A worldview based on "[w]estern cultural traditions" (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3) defines the category of space as a boundary-infested territory. Likewise, "[t]he cartographers thought if they mapped it, everything would remain the same" but the "land refused to be shaped by the makers of maps" (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 123), much like many Native Americans refuse to be shaped and defined by social boundaries. Nature's "wildness, its stubborn passion to remain outside their [the cartographers'] sense of order made them want it even more" (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 123). A desire to control nature remains doomed to fail. Angel's Auntie comments on the prevailing ignorance of nature exhibited by the non-Natives in *Solar Storms*: "Did you know that the men building these dams didn't even know that water ran north" (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 275). Tribal knowledge of nature allows Native Americans to see past artificial physical and social barriers.

Peggy Ackerberg, in her article "Breaking Boundaries: Writing Past Gender, Genre, and Genocide in Linda Hogan," claims that "Hogan weaves her boundary-breaking imperative throughout her poetry, fiction, essays, and interviews"⁹¹. Hogan's "boundary-breaking imperative" (Ackerberg 7) remains inseparable from her preoccupation with nature. She focuses on nature's disregard for artificial boundaries to strengthen her argument that American Indian social relations resist the containment that results from western spatial analysis. She sets *Solar Storms* in a region "known as the Triangle" that "had long been in dispute between Canada, the United States, and tribal nations" (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 66) and "where water was broken apart by land, land split open by water so that the maps showed places both bound and, if you knew the way in, boundless" (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 21). The Triangle and its waterways remain undefined, unclaimed, and unconfined by countries or maps. Omishto also comments on nature's lack of boundaries: "There are no edges, no borders between the elements because everything is water, silver and glassy. The whole ground moves and shimmers as if it is alive" (Hogan, *Power* 46). Hogan illustrates nature's ability not only to deconstruct spatial boundaries through its fluidity, but also to completely erase the boundaries. Due to their links to nature, tribal relations mirror nature's disregard for boundaries and resist the boundaries that spatial theory imposes on them. Angel Wing embarks on a journey of discovery that causes her to state that her "vision shifted" (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 85) in this uncharted, at least inaccurately charted, and undefined territory. By accepting the tribal way of viewing space and by extension Native American social relations, boundaries previously impenetrable to Angel become "doorway[s] into the mythical world" (Hogan, *Dwellings* 19).

Hogan's novels seek to demonstrate that social relations, when imbedded within a tribal context, cause a shift in perspective. One character in *Solar Storms* declares "that earth has more than one dimension. The one we see is only the first layer" (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 123). By searching for 'other' (natural) ways of knowing, not just relying on sight, and by re-imag(in)ing her preconceived notions predicated on the western way of knowing, Angel learns to see beneath the surface, and "one

⁹¹ Peggy Maddux Ackerberg, "Breaking Boundaries: Writing Past Gender, Genre, and Genocide in Linda Hogan", in *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 6.3 (Fall 1994): 7.

day my vision shifted and I could even see the fish on the bottom" (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 85). Angel's experiences, within the fold of her extended family and community and in the improperly charted waterways of the Triangle, allow her to re-imag(in)e herself and her role within a tribal context.

By advocating a perspective that shifts away from the dominant social group's theoretical approach to explaining reality and instead moving towards a view influenced by a Native American worldview, the author's written narratives offer new perspectives on how humans negotiate and relate to each other and their environment. For example, dominant theories of space argue about masculine and feminized space versus female space or ethnic space. The theorists try to posit, from the privileged position that theory holds within academia, ways of 'knowing' the space that we inhabit. Unlike Hogan's explicitly stated recognition that her perspectives are influenced by "old tribal intelligence...newly called the Gaia hypothesis" which stems from an assumption "that everything is alive" (Hogan, Metzger, and Peterson, xii), these theories fail to recognize that they are constrained by a set of assumptions based on a scientific way of 'knowing'⁹². Academia itself consists of separate departments that attempt to know a particular subject by studying it in exclusion from other disciplines, and oftentimes without acknowledging its narrow approach and constraints. She depicts the tension between a propensity to abstract and her belief in experience through a realtor in *Power*: "He sees subdivisions. I see life" (Hogan, *Power* 196). These books question a worldview that seeks to subdivide "life" (Hogan, *Power* 196). Hogan argues that communication with nature, and an observational study of it, leads to a more holistic understanding of Native American tribal relations.

The dominant social group informs and remains influenced by the narrative of space as power, but tries to position itself outside any such influences. In other words, it tries to exist separately from the very attitudes and perspectives that have shaped and built it into what it is. A striking example of this attitude emerges through analyzing the notion of a house. In the United States, arguably as an extension of its links to Europe, a house becomes a haven and sterile oasis in many modern societies amid the dangerous and filthy wilderness: "houses 'ought to be' web-free"⁹³. Hogan calls for a more empirical, rather than abstract, view of nature and tribal relations. An example of this tension exists in the idea that houses reflect the Euro-American tradition of separating and dividing space. A house attempts to provide spatial boundaries by creating walls that try to contain space and to keep the wilderness outside and separate from the inside. Houses attempt to separate people from nature as "[w]e are supposed to live within four sterile walls" (Hogan, "A Heart Made Out of Crickets" 113). However, Hogan's characters' views concerning the notion of the house radically differ from this Euroamerican tradition. For them, the confines of the house do not exist as separate from the perceived 'outside'. In *Mean Spirit*, *Power*, and *Solar Storms*, the houses reflect very different values; instead of houses that remain sterile, she depicts nature's disregard for such artificial boundaries.

⁹² Science seeks to separate and label specimens, or small segments, of an entity in an effort to control and obtain knowledge. Academia adopts this scientific methodology of separating and labeling different areas of study in the same quest for knowledge.

⁹³ Linda Hogan, interview, "A Heart Made Out of Crickets: An Interview with Linda Hogan," *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 16.1 (1988): 113.

Repeatedly her characters describe houses as inseparable from nature rather than as artificially autonomous objects. Hogan's depictions of the houses' links to nature symbolically resemble tree roots in that roots keep trees from being uprooted; likewise, the tribal context, with its 'roots' in nature, serves to keep tribal relations from being uprooted and abstracted. In other words, ties to nature ground Native American relations within a tribal context. Hogan introduces this theme in the first page of *Mean Spirit* when she writes that "[g]iven half a chance, the vines and leaves would have crept up the beds and overgrown the sleeping bodies of people" (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 3). She advocates the belief that nature acts as an empirical example of the dynamic nature of relationships. For Hogan, "Beyond walls are lakes and plains, / canyons and the universe"⁹⁴; however, "the walls [are] no longer there"⁹⁵. Her poem illustrates her belief that walls have no place in nature. Repeatedly she depicts nature's ability to push through and dismiss spatial barriers. Houses and walls, when perceived as rigid and fixed boundaries that separate civilization from wilderness, are western constructs. Hogan's revision of spatial boundaries allows us to "[look] through the walls of houses / at people suspended in air" (Hogan, "The New Apartment, Minneapolis" 263). Her portrayal of people in a suspended state within spatial boundaries illustrates her view of dominant space as a rigid and confining construct that, because it abstracts experiences and relations from their contexts, suspends life within its artificial walls. Hogan's walls symbolically represent spatial barriers that contain people within rigid and fixed 'spaces'. By questioning and dissolving spatial barriers, she exposes the relations and contexts that western narratives of space attempt to mask and she frees social relations from their state of suspension.

Hogan portrays nature's disregard for, and its ability to overgrow, man-made constructs in an effort to illustrate her conviction that any attempts, social or man-made, to bind nature or Native Americans are futile. Instead she believes that "the walls of houses / that hold you in / will...[fall] away to earth / once again"⁹⁶. Through her writing and her illustration of the links between tribal traditions and nature, Hogan metaphorically and literally collapses walls and spatial barriers. Grace Blanket places her piano outside where "a neighboring chicken built a nest on the keys" (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 9); Sara's and Benoit's mattress became a "nest" in a tree (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 119); Jim Josh's bathtubs had "corn...growing" in them, and his car contained "pots and wooden boxes full of tomato plants" (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 156); Bush's house on the island had vines that "crept inside and reached across the inner walls" (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 69); Ama's house has "wood...so rough that moss tries to grow on it and the blue flowers and vines of morning glories climb up it" (Hogan, *Power* 7); and "the roots of trees are always trying to break" into Herm's cellar (Hogan, *Power* 90). Hogan utilizes this theme to further her argument that clearly demarcated boundaries between the man-made walls and the 'outside' do not exist in nature, and therefore do not exist in Native American

⁹⁴ Linda Hogan, "The New Apartment, Minneapolis," *Native American Literature: A Brief Introduction and Anthology*, ed. Gerald Vizenor (Berkeley: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1995) 264.

⁹⁵ Linda Hogan, "Amanda: For the Oneida Indians," *That's What She Said: Contemporary Poetry and Fiction by Native American Women*, ed. Rayna Green (Bloomington: Indian UP, 1984) 173.

⁹⁶ Linda Hogan, "The Cup," *That's What She Said: Contemporary Poetry and Fiction by Native American Women*, ed. Rayna Green (Bloomington: Indian UP, 1984) 173.

experience. By challenging this separatist view of space, she “re-visions” (Salvaggio 273) the dominant culture’s perceived ‘reality’.

Like Salvaggio’s discussion of women’s writings dissolving hierarchical and masculine boundaries, Linda Hogan uses the characters in her novels, their perspectives, languages, writing, and their worldviews to dissolve the spatial barriers and stereotypes that bind American Indians. Her novels question the systemization and regulation of Literature and language and further demolish the “impenetrable” boundaries that surround the literary discipline and theories of space. Through the act of writing and the power of language, Hogan illustrates dynamic relationships that challenge the practice of privileging abstract theories of space. Speaking and writing stories remain crucial to Native American authors’ attempts to reconfigure social relations because “Story is a power that describes our world, our human being, sets out the rules and intricate laws of human beings in relationship with all the rest” (Hogan, “First People” 9). The stories reflect tribal worldviews and the tribal members’ relationships to each other, to nature, and to the western world. Throughout the novel *Mean Spirit*, Linda Hogan’s character, Michael Horse, sits in his teepee and types what he later calls “the Gospel of Horse” (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 273). Father Dunne, the Catholic priest in *Mean Spirit* vehemently protests Horse’s addition to the Bible and he continually tells Horse that he “can’t do that” (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 273). According to Protestant and Catholic belief, the Bible became a bound book in the year 397 AD. The Council of Carthage, acting on behalf of its religious institution, decided that no further books could be added to the New Testament Canon of the Bible⁹⁷. Despite the priest’s conviction that Horse cannot add a new chapter to the Bible, Horse continues to write. Horse ignores “canonical boundaries” and he “rewrites the Bible” (Ackerberg 13). Hogan uses this act of writing to illustrate that books do not exist as bound and impenetrable texts. Horse irreverently disregards, or remains unaware of the previous decision, and by failing to recognize the council’s decision as a social and religious barrier, he illustrates the fragility of the man-imposed boundary and makes a mockery of attempts to control and constrain a dynamic force.

Through this example, the author offers her readers a living and dynamic view of writing that differs from attempts to canonize Literature in its ‘purest’ form. Horse’s decision to add a chapter to the Bible also illustrates his view of writing and storytelling as very different from a dominant view of books and Literature because his decision links his writing to the oral tradition of American Indian societies. Horse informs the priest that “the Bible is full of mistakes” and that he “would correct them” (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 273). He again challenges the dominant and institutionalized belief that books exist as static and rigid objects and he argues that writing remains a dynamic and changeable process.

The perspective that Linda Hogan offers through Horse’s writing, and by extension her own writing, perpetuates Paula Gunn Allen’s definition of the American Indians’ oral tradition as “a living body” (Allen 224). Hogan’s writings become modern adaptations of the American Indian oral tradition and remain inseparable from the American Indian worldview. In *Power*, Hogan’s character Omishto’s story reflects aspects of oral storytelling. Omishto relates a story to the reader, to the court,

⁹⁷ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, ed., *Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Translation* (Chicago: Moody P, 1978) 1440.

and to her community. The story focuses around an event, a storm, that Omishto experienced in the past, re-experiences as she relates the story in the present, and will experience in the future when she retells the story. The story cycles around itself, constantly shifts, and “is in continuous flux” (Allen 224) as she relates “the same story” (Hogan, *Power* 162) but focuses on different interpretations. The story also incorporates traditional tribal stories and songs. Hogan links her stories to tribal oral traditions, and her written works offer her readers a tribal perspective of Native American social relations, negotiations, and writing that differs from the static and separatist dominant view upheld by the “men who have” in “[t]heir attempt to chart the spatial dimensions of literature...measure[d] off...the territory” of the canon (Salvaggio 263)⁹⁸.

Rather than accepting the dominant view of writing and language as oppressive tools used to rigidly control and dominate space—this only occurs if one insists on accepting the view of writing as static—Hogan portrays writing as liberating. Michael Horse describes his writing as necessary for the future of his people and as a healing process. He felt “as if he could write away the appearances of things and take them all the way back down to bare truth....He was writing for those who would come later,...as if the act of writing was itself part of divination and prophecy, an act of deliverance” (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 341). Horse’s perspective of writing alludes to the function that the oral tradition holds within Native American culture, and his description indelibly links the past, the present, and the future to the act of writing and then links writing to a process of healing.

Through her writing, like Horse, Hogan tries to strip away the stagnant and segmented space that “[w]estern cultural traditions” (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3) view as reality, or what Gloria Anzaldúa terms “[t]he masks, *las máscaras*,”⁹⁹ to reveal, to her readers, the dynamic and organic nature of tribal relations. Through Horse, Hogan deals with the controversial issue concerning writing and the oral tradition. Oral stories traditionally involve the act of speaking, not writing, but Horse answers the question “Why can’t you just speak it?” by stating that “They [non-Native people] don’t believe anything is true unless they see it in writing” (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 361). While the United States’ very existence relies on the written word of the Constitution, the American Indian population has an understandable mistrust of written documents that led to the protest dubbed “The Trail of Broken Treaties”¹⁰⁰. Native Americans have been forced into an abrupt understanding of “[w]estern cultural” (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3) practices through the imposition of allotments, boarding schools, and relocation programs to name a few. However, Hogan and her character Horse recognize the necessity of writing because, rather than living in-between two different worlds, their world has been surrounded, divided, over-

⁹⁸ Ruth Salvaggio discusses the literary discipline in spatial terms as something that attempts to “occupy” a “territory” or space, and that is “measure[d] off” and “stake[d] out” (Salvaggio 263). She further argues that “[t]he space of the canon was mapped out...establishing the bounds for a systematic study of English and American literature” (Salvaggio 263). Here again Salvaggio depicts Literature, as a discipline within academia, as a rigid and bound system.

⁹⁹ Gloria Anzaldúa, “Haciendo Caras, Una Entrada,” *Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1990) xv.

¹⁰⁰ Jim Vander Wall, “A Warrior Caged: The Continuing Struggle of Leonard Peltier,” *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston: South End P, 1992) 291.

shadowed, and infiltrated by the laws and beliefs upheld by the dominant culture in the United States and its institutions. Hogan, through Horse, clearly illustrates the different use of language and writing that shapes her works and this variation significantly alters the way Native American writings operate in comparison to the literary canon.

Linda Hogan's readers experience her resistance to attempts to label social relations according to western spatial theories. Configuring social relations in space through abstract concepts and categories legitimizes attempts to own and appropriate 'other' experience: to 'write' over something that already exists, and through space to acquire the power of 'knowing'. Hogan's books resist the 'accepted' view of space that remains predicated on notions of ownership and superiority, and she offers a new perspective of social relations based on tribal traditions and experiences. Omishto's struggle to understand the two systems of law that affect her life after her Aunt Ama kills an endangered and, as the Taiga believe, sacred panther best illustrates the differences between the two worldviews. U.S. laws "divide one part of life from another. It has separated by scars, legal theft, even the stone of earth split...and then it covers everything broken all back over in words" (Hogan, *Power* 118). Omishto's description of U.S. laws reflects its links to abstract ideas that create spatial barriers. Conversely, the tribal law relies on "the laws of this place, this world, laws stronger and older than America" (Hogan, *Power* 160). Through her exposure to the laws of nature, Omishto experiences a rebirth that results in her eventual understanding of the delicate balance between "right and wrong" (Hogan, *Power* 62) and her return to the Taiga community. By illustrating Native American social relations and laws as inseparable from tribal experiences and nature's laws, Hogan defies attempts to separate Native American social relations from their tribal context through spatial analysis, and to appropriate those experiences.

Linda Hogan also uses Hannah Wing to emphasize the dangers of subscribing to a worldview that advocates a belief in appropriating 'empty space'. Hannah's body exemplifies the dangers in believing that language and writing can dominate and own space, and she uses Hannah to protest against the dominant view that led to the "policy of involuntary surgical sterilization...imposed upon native women" (Jaimes and Halsey 326). Hannah's character depicts the destructive belief that American Indian women were somehow less than human and that their bodies represent an 'other' lack to inscribe and an 'other' territory to own. Hannah's body represents an empty space to the men who try to own her and to fill her with the language of violence. Hannah "was a skin that others wore" (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 77) and "her skin was a garment of scars. There were burns and incisions. Like someone had written on her. The signatures of torturers [emphasis added]" (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 99). Hannah symbolizes a blank space for others, including Linda Hogan, to write over. The author deliberately juxtaposes the act of torture to the act of writing. Hannah's body becomes the vessel for all the violations that American Indians suffered at the hands of their colonizers. The rape of Hannah's soul by "[t]he signatures of torturers" (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 99) symbolically represents the theft of Native American land by signatures on treaties.

Hannah's dilemma provides a method of healing these violations and offers a refreshing way to view writing. Through her books, Hogan criticizes language and writing that seeks to dominate, bind, and torture by "successfully...draw[ing] her reader into the Native American value system she is

inculcating”¹⁰¹. The “value system” that Musher alludes to, or more precisely Hogan’s rejection of abstract space, causes a questioning of the preconceived notions that inform current attitudes towards writing and the literary discipline. Language and words begin to take on a different significance as one reads Hogan’s books. Through Hannah, the author emphasizes a theme that permeates her works: the power of song. The “Old Man” tells Bush that healing Hannah would require “a ceremony”:

*the words of which were so beautiful that they called birds out of the sky, but the song itself would break the singer’s life. No one still alive was strong enough to sing it. Not him, he said. Because things had so changed. Not any of the old men or women. And there was a word for what was wrong with her, he said, but no one would say it. They were afraid it would hear its name and come to them. (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 101)*

The significance of this paragraph is manifold; it describes words, in the form of a song, as powerful enough to communicate with nature, to “break life” (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 101), and to bring harm to whoever dared to invoke the song’s power. This excerpt also alludes to the impotence of the song, not because the song lacks strength, but because the passage of time has made the song ineffective. Again, Hogan links the need for flexible, rather than static, views of language and words as they emerge and shift within an oral and tribal framework.

I believe that Hogan offers her books as a new type of ceremony to heal the “lost or stolen souls” (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 101) that have become separated from their tribal context. Her works act as a continuation of the oral traditions and songs that remain a crucial part of many tribal societies but with one notable exception, that they are written rather than spoken. In her novels, characters write to educate others in spite of social and physical barriers; Bush becomes “a truth teller” (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 308) by writing articles that get ‘smuggled’ past the road and water barriers in *Solar Storms* in protest at the dam building, Michael Horse writes an additional chapter to add to the Bible to cover the omissions that exist in the Bible despite opposition from the church’s representative, Moses Graycloud and Michael Horse write two letters to Washington about the deaths in Watona despite the risk to their lives, and Omishto writes “an autobiographical essay” (Hogan, *Power* 109), that evolves into a story that explains the Taiga traditions and worldview. She later tears up the story “into little pieces” (Hogan, *Power* 112) because, although it describes her worldview, it does not fulfill the criteria for an inflexible school essay, and members of the dominant culture could not imagine the story just as “Ama, too, is nothing they can imagine” (Hogan, *Power* 130). Writing becomes an act of resistance against, liberation from, and a place to re-imag(in)e constricting spatial boundaries through her stories’ connections to the oral tradition. Socially the oral tradition remains a crucial component of Native American life and it influences and is influenced by Native Americans’ perspectives and experiences.

Ana Castillo argues that “language is the vehicle by which we perceive ourselves in relation to the world”¹⁰². The English language’s relationship to power, as it relates to the written word and to legal processes and documents, resides within the power structure behind its creation. Those who

¹⁰¹ Andrea Musher, “Showdown at Sorrow Cave: Bat Medicine and the Spirit of Resistance in *Mean Spirit*,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 6.3 (Fall 1994): 26.

¹⁰² Ana Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers*, (New York: Penguin, 1994) 167.

command and create language achieve a privileged position, while those who do not are silenced. Trinh T. Minh-ha warns her readers that “Power...has always inscribed itself in language” and that “language is one of the most complex forms of subjugation” (Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other* 52). The emphasis that the dominant social group places on language, and the manner in which it attempts to own language, an attitude that reflects the socially accepted view that space can be controlled and owned, allows the colonizers to wield language as a tool for oppression.

Hogan’s books resist the belief that language exists as a bound system. Instead, Hogan depicts languages’ and writings’ fusion with the Native American oral tradition. She emphasizes this crucial difference throughout her novels. Her character Belle Graycloud “[uses] words as a road out of pain and fear” (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 33) as she attempts to contextualize Grace Blanket’s death for Horse. Grace’s death becomes incorporated into the Osage tribe’s tribal context through Belle’s oral rendition of the story, which firmly links it to the tribe’s oral tradition. In her book, *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World*, Hogan states that “It is the story, really, that finds its way into language, and story is at the very crux of healing” (Hogan 37). Her character Angel, through “words [that] were creation itself” learns to express herself by “finding a language, a story to shape...[herself] by” (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 94). By subsuming the words into a story within a tribal framework, Hogan illustrates the healing potential of words.

Hogan also depicts the problematic situation caused by privileging one language over others. The non-Indians of Talbert, or Watona, remain bound by a constricting view of language while the Hill Indians and various Indians of Watona, who begin to re-enter the tribal framework, benefit from their experience with languages: Father Dunne hears “the sound of earth speaking. It was the deep and dreaming voice of land” (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 188) and Horse learned “the languages of owls and bats” (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 260). Michael Horse has already transgressed “the language boundary” when he translated “three languages during the Boxer Rebellion, facilitating communication between the colonizer and the colonized” (Ackerberg 12). These additional languages add authority to his supplementary book of the Bible. His book becomes a means to promote communication between the colonizer and the colonized.

Like the Indians in Watona, Angel, in *Solar Storms*, learns about the power of languages: the women in her family easily negotiate the complex and uncharted waterways because they “were articulate in the languages of land, water, animal, even in the harder languages of one another” (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 193), Husk explains to Angel that “metal bridges were taken down...by the song of wind” (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 102), and she comes to believe that “[t]here were times...when they [animals and humans] both spoke the same language” (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 82). In *Power*, Omishto listens to the wind as it “blows their [the old people’s] thoughts toward me as I float. As if a small voice is speaking at my ear, one that tells me what it is my people believe” (Hogan, *Power* 180). Again, Hogan questions the power structure behind a worldview that allows for the privileging of one language through the perceived inadequacies and lack of an ‘other’. English becomes one way of communicating, but Hogan’s characters benefit from their exposure to nature’s languages. Her analysis of language, space, literature, the oral tradition, and houses triggers a questioning of the invaders’ “static perception of the world” (Freire 159), which leads to re-imag(in)ing social relations within a tribal context.

Arguably, Hogan collapses current theories of space through her attempts to reconfigure and re-imag(in)e reality by placing her characters' social relations within tribal frameworks, which remain inseparable from nature and its laws. Her stories illustrate both tribal experiences' and nature's resistance to spatially constructed boundaries such as maps and walls. Her reconfiguration of languages, writing, and nature function as the foundation for her attempts to reconfigure reality. She re-imag(in)es "the 'real'" (Rainwater 139) by collapsing spatial boundaries, which do not exist in her experience but instead exist as western constructs. Rather than viewing boundaries as barriers she sees "doorway[s] into the mythical world" (*Dwellings* 19).

Ancestors and Ritual Journeys: Re-Stitching Stories to a Tribal Quilt

Hogan depicts sewing, a crucial image in her poem "The Women Quilting," as a metaphor for reconnecting the tribal community to nature and tribal experiences. In the poem, sewing reveals nature's patterns and designs and also exposes the relations and designs that shape people. Sewing symbolizes reconnection and combats abstraction. Sewing "Push[es] the needle up into layers of cloth, / bring[s] it back down. / As the sun / and the world / and the brief white stitches, birdsfeet / pacing a design into snow"¹⁰³, and later she stitches parts of a person's stories into the design: "a rose, / a part of her life / the lost children / nights with John / and smell of loves / and body so young / that wore it" (Hogan, "The Women Quilting" 176). She incorporates experiences and new stories, characters' stories within her stories, into tribal contexts as part of a healing ritual that stitches *all* stories into a framework that reflects its ties to nature and tribal wisdom. In her novels *Mean Spirit*, *Solar Storms*, and *Power* she re-stitches her characters to the layers of time, stories, traditions, and people: to a tribal framework. By re-stitching them into a quilt of the tribal stories and experiences that influence their lives, she resists attempts to abstract the designs and patterns of their lives in space and she seeks to alter "contemporary reality" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* ix).

In her three novels, Hogan creates characters that illustrate the consequences that de-contextualization from their tribal milieu has on Native Americans while she simultaneously 'saves' other characters by re-stitching their stories into a tribal context. In *Power*, the elders banish Hogan's character Ama from the tribe after she kills a sacred Taiga panther. Omishto describes Ama's banishment from the tribe, and she explains that "in our language the word for 'banish' and the word for 'kill' is the same word; it's the same because in the traditional belief, banishment is equal to death" (Hogan, *Power* 172). Ama's removal from the tribal context of the Taiga people is equated with death. Although the tribe enforced Ama's banishment, this particular example epitomizes the devastation that occurs when American Indians become separated from their tribal context. The

¹⁰³ Linda Hogan, "The Women Quilting," *That's What She Said: Contemporary Poetry and Fiction by Native American Women*, ed. Rayna Green (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984) 175.

comparison between removal from a tribal context and death also appears in Hogan's depiction of the inhabitants of Tar Town and Angel's sister.

In *Mean Spirit*, Tar Town is the farthest town from the mythical Hill Indians' settlement. Hogan uses the geographical distance between Tar Town and the Hill Settlement, whose inhabitants remain fully immersed in their tribal context, to symbolize how distance from a 'living' tribal tradition affects "the once-beautiful people" (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 275). The people that inhabit Tar Town maintain no links with their tribal traditions and so they now live in "a miserable underworld" and in a "broken world, hell's tinderbox" (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 275). The inhabitants of Tar Town symbolize the devastation that Native American cultures face due to a narrative of domination and appropriation. Their struggle for acceptance into the dominant social group, and their distance (in Hogan's novel this distance is physical, spiritual, and emotional in nature) from their Native American heritage results in their death-like existence: they are mere reflections of human beings. Hogan describes them as "broken men and destroyed women" and "human bodies that...[have] gone to decay," and their pain and misery cause their "skin" to become "something else, a wall, a membrane between the worlds of creation and destruction" (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 275). Hogan portrays the people as "broken" (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 275) just as tribal relations are broken from their contexts. As a result, their bodies have already begun to decay. Although they are technically alive, Hogan equates their existence with spiritual death. Again, she depicts the effects of separation from a tribal context through death-like images.

Angel relates a story in *Solar Storms* about her blood sister Henriette. Angel's story depicts Henriette as inarticulate. Henriette "was lovely and quiet," but "She spoke through blades, translated her life through knives" (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 118). She has no connections to tribal traditions or languages, which would allow her to express her experiences within a tribal framework. Although "she was a girl who cut herself, cut her own skin" (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 118), Henriette "could not be hurt" (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 118). Angel's description of Henriette as inarticulate and exempt from pain mirrors Hogan's description of the near-dead inhabitants of Tar Town. Henriette is dead spiritually and emotionally.

To ensure that her characters and readers remain a part of her tribal stories, Hogan immediately shifts her readers into a tribal framework by unsettling the act of naming in her books. She addresses the importance of naming and the government's propensity to write over existing names in its continued attempts to define and own space. Through her characters and novels, Hogan reappropriates the act of naming. Thomas Thornton postulates that "Place names are cherished among Native American peoples who have a rich appreciation for their own geography and toponyms and relate place names to their sense of being"¹⁰⁴. While "the dominant literary discourse" (Ruppert 3) seeks to impose spatial boundaries by writing over what it views as empty space, Hogan reclaims and re-renames through her novels. Hogan sets *Mean Spirit* in a town that the non-Natives call Talbert, but the Indians call Watona. She describes the "sign...Talbert, Oklahoma, was covered with red paint, and WATONA was written over it in large black letters" (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 55). Hogan

¹⁰⁴ Thomas F. Thornton, "Anthropological Studies of Native American Place Naming," *American Indian Quarterly* 21.2 (1997): 221.

positions her novel in a place where naming and labeling remain a point of contention. Naming also plays a part in *Power* when Omishto points out that the main route to Ama's and the Taiga's settlement has an existing name that maps have over written. She states that "Fossil Road is what we call it, although some people call it State Road 59" (Hogan, *Power* 5-6). Hogan's novels, like the vandals in *Mean Spirit*, reclaim the acts of naming and writing. According to her character Husk in *Solar Storms*, "The names...were like layers of time" (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 65), and Hogan's stories re-stitch the layers together within a tribal framework. This act of naming firmly positions the books within a tribal context and indicates the resistance exhibited in her stories to any attempts to map out and define Native American experiences through spatial analysis.

As discussed in the introduction to the thesis, tribal links to nature are part of the healing ritual experienced by Hogan's characters and remain crucial components of 'living' traditions, which exist as aspects of tribal contexts. Hogan's written works intimately link the well being of the tribal community with the state of nature. In *Power* she links the state of the tribe with the Florida panther. She "liken[s] the plight of the Taiga to that of the endangered Florida panther"¹⁰⁵, which serves to "[elevate] animal and human simultaneously" (Baria 70). In *Solar Storms*, she depicts the disastrous effects of man-imposed floods on nature and thus on the native community. The dam flooded the land that the Fat Eaters inhabit, and "In the first flooding...they'd killed many thousands of caribou" (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 57). The characters are forced to fight for the animals' survival in order to ensure their own survival. In *Mean Spirit* she unites the tribe with the welfare of bats and eagles. Bats, like American Indians, negotiate between worlds, and the well being of the American Indians remains linked to the "creatures who traverse the borderlines of night and day, bird and beast, cave and sky"¹⁰⁶. When the bats are threatened due to a killing spree triggered by a rabies scare, the tribe rallies together in order to protect the bats. She also draws parallels between the ruin of nature and the death of the tribe through the incident with the eagles. Alix Casteel points out that "'Moses' face went dead and empty' like the dead eagle carcasses; 'Belle's eyes turned silver as knife blades' like 'the blue-white membranes of death' over the eagle eyes; and 'Horse looked smaller than usual' like the 'small, gone' eagles" (Casteel 52). Hogan's portrayal of the links between tribes and nature depict the indivisibility of nature from their tribal contexts.

Tribal healing, a benefit that stems from re-stitching social interactions and stories to a tribal context, always remains tied to nature and tribal activity. The tribes' ties to nature demonstrate some of the differences between an Euroamerican worldview and a tribal worldview:

Native American conceptualizations...unite the earth with all living beings as one harmonious ecosystem. First, the Native American places him- or herself within this system as a participant, while the Euroamerican places him- or herself outside and above this system as an owner and interpreter. The Indians understand not only that they and the land are connected, as evidenced by their suffering similar wounds, but also that they

¹⁰⁵ Amy Greenwood Baria, "Linda Hogan's Two Worlds," rev. of *Power*, by Linda Hogan, *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 10.4 (Winter 1998): 68.

¹⁰⁶ Janet St. Clair, "Processing the Native American through Western Consciousness: D. H. Lawrence and the Red Indians of the Americas," *The Wicazo-Sa Review* 12.2 (1997): 89.

both suffer these violations through the common motive of profit” (Casteel 50).

I have already demonstrated the indivisibility of nature from the tribal context, but Hogan’s written narratives re-imag(in)e more than a simple illustration of the disastrous effects of spatial theories, which lead to the conquest of Native America, on nature and the American Indian tribes. She depicts the healing bond between nature and the tribes as integral to re-imag(in)ing and revisioning reality. In her novel *Power*, Omishto’s story begins “outside of the traditional Taiga” (Baria 69) context, and “Her reality consists of dominant culture tinged with invitation into... what feels like the past, like old ways” (Baria 69). Although Omishto begins her story from a context influenced by “[w]estern cultural traditions” (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3), Hogan quickly, through Omishto’s interaction with Ama, shifts the story’s context and places it within a tribal framework.

Understanding and including a western worldview and its stories and spatial theories into Native American stories represent only a fraction of the complex components that American Indians must balance within their tribal framework. Tribal traditions represent another component. The role of ancestors in Hogan’s novels and poems illustrates the importance of the inclusion of tribal pasts as part of a ‘living’ tradition, and as inseparable from her project to re-stitch social relations into a tribal milieu. In *Solar Storms* Angel thinks “of the ancestors who showed Dora-Rouge the directions for travel” (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 189). The ancestors’ stories and wisdom guide contemporary American Indians and become part of the present. For American Indians, their tribal contexts remain inseparable from “the mythic past, and all the other lives connected to ours, our families, nations, and all other creatures” (Hogan, *Dwellings* 37). As a recurring theme in her novels, ancestors represent Hogan’s resistance to the abstraction that serves to sever tribal relations and connections to nature and ‘other’ stories. Just as links between tribal frameworks and nature prevent abstraction, so too do ancestors bind tribal experiences and relations to a tribal context. In poetry used in her autobiography, Hogan’s narrator discusses the “old men who live inside me / ...all his people... walking / through my veins without speech”¹⁰⁷ and “the ancestors / in and around me” (Hogan, “The Two Lives” 246). American Indians remain linked to their ancestors through tribal stories and ceremonies, and this link protects them from feelings of alienation.

Hogan reveals her project in *Power* to alter reality by reconfiguring Omishto’s perception of reality through the ancestors and their stories. Omishto looks “back at the tracks... as if we’ve grown from them, as if they created us and we... rose up as if from the footprints of our ancestors” (Hogan, *Power* 54). As Omishto revises her story through a tribal lens, rather than through “[w]estern cultural traditions” (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3), her perceptions of reality change. The quotation above encapsulates the intentions behind Hogan’s project that she articulates in her written narratives: Omishto’s tracks symbolize Native Americans’ pasts that have “grown” (Hogan, *Power* 54), an image that alludes to their tribal links to the natural world, and emerges out of their predecessors’ tribal wisdom. Hogan’s novels have also ‘grown’ out of a tribal framework, and she illustrates this by re-stitching her protagonists to the tribal ceremonies and stories

¹⁰⁷ Linda Hogan, “The Two Lives,” *I Tell You Now: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers*, eds. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat (London: U of Nebraska P, 1987) 235.

of their ancestors by speaking words that have the power to “*break life*” (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 101). In *Power*, Omishto reveals the intertwined relationship between Taiga people and their links to nature and their ancestors as a determining factor for their survival: “Taiga, this small band of people...once nearly gone” survived because “our ancestors knew to move along the water silently because we learned this from the panther and this is how, in dark nights and foggy days, we survived the invaders” (Hogan, *Power* 139). Omishto discloses the intricate and beneficial relationship that the Taigas have with nature, while she simultaneously conflates the Taiga people’s ancestors with the contemporary Taigas. She begins this story with a statement about a non-self inclusive group located in the past. She then conflates the past and the present by appropriating her ancestors’ experiences as her own experiences: “we survived” (Hogan, *Power* 139). Omishto re-stitches her ancestors’ experiences into her story because “time is here at once, I am my ancestors, and they foresaw me” (Hogan, *Power* 215). Hogan collapses linear time into *now*. Past, present and future all exist *now* in her stories as part of a ‘living’ tradition.

As opposites to Hogan’s “broken men and destroyed women” (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 275), Hogan depicts the Taiga tribe’s old people, the people who live on “the Hundred-Year-Old Road” (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 228), and the Hill people as myth-like ancestors who maintain their links to tribal traditions. Hogan uses these characters to illustrate ancient traditions, and she intentionally endows them with myth-like attributes. Their mystical status indicates their purpose in the books as healers. Hogan’s main protagonists’ contact with the elusive “old people” (Hogan, *Power* 166)¹⁰⁸ in her three novels gradually increases as they become more familiar with tribal traditions and stories, and this contact enables them to regenerate a ‘living’ tradition. In a circular manner, as the inhabitants of Watona in *Mean Spirit*, Angel and her family in *Solar Storms*, and as Omishto in *Power* begin to contact the old people of their respective tribes more often, the old people exhibit less myth-like attributes. Without the constant incorporation of current stories into the tribal framework, Native American tribal traditions risk becoming static myths without power to influence the present.

Hogan’s mystical Hill people escape intervention from U.S. governmental agencies, and their unmappable settlement resists spatial analysis. She depicts their settlement as fluid and dynamic by giving them the ability “to hide” the road to their settlement (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 304). Not only do the United States’ authorities remain oblivious to the existence of the settlement, but the inhabitants of Watona also struggle to “find it” (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 304). The people who accept a western worldview see the Hill people very rarely, and the Hill people initially appear as mystical beings to the people of Watona. Hogan manipulates her readers and the characters of Watona; they view the Hill people as concrete beings only after the townspeople return to traditional ways. The Hill Indians are introduced as “a mystical group whose peculiar running discipline and austere habits earned them a special place in both the human world and the world of spirits” (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 5). They remain elusive to the Indians of Watona, and initially they only intentionally emerge when the people of Watona need them: to protect Nola, at the trial, and to prevent bat killings. Even then, Hogan depicts them as “ethereal” and they are often linked to the spirit world (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 45). These

¹⁰⁸ I have appropriated the term “old people” (Hogan, *Power* 166) to represent the Taiga tribe’s old people, the Hill Indians, and the Hundred-Year people.

enigmatic people remain a mystery. However, Andrea Musher states that “the Hill Indians provide a relatively uncorrupted link to the past and their settlement serves as an actual and symbolic refuge to the Indians” (Musher 25). Through the Hill Indians, Hogan recognizes the key roles that tribal traditions and histories play in a dynamic and fluid tribal framework. As soon as the inhabitants of Watona “[go] back into the hearts of their lives, back into the hills and back to older ways” (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 211), the Hill people lose some of their mysticism.

Not only do the protagonists in Hogan’s novels benefit from their interaction with the ‘old people’, but the ‘old people’ in her books also benefit from their contact with the other American Indian characters in the novels. The main protagonists bring vitality and change to the tribal frameworks and influence a ‘living’ tradition by introducing the old people to their experiences with the dominant social group. Hogan re-imag(in)es a tribal framework that remains inseparable from new experiences; however, she qualifies the manner in which the new stories are allowed to enter the tribal frameworks. One of the Hill Indians, Cry, relates a story about the trial in *Mean Spirit* to her community. Before she is allowed to tell the story to the tribe, the women “cleanse her” (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 339). Before Omishto’s, before Angel’s, before the Grayclouds’ stories can become part of tribal traditions, the characters must learn to perceive their experiences within a tribal context. Through their ritual journeys, they must “cleanse” (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 339) themselves of their preconceived notions that are based upon a western worldview, and instead they must begin to perceive their experiences and stories within a tribal framework.

By embarking on these journeys, Hogan’s characters reclaim tribal perceptions of space and time. Brian Goehring and John Stager discuss the impact that the introduction of the invaders’ worldview has had on the Inuits:

Incrementally, little by little, the Inuit have been incorporated into a world doled out in seconds and minutes, measured in hours and days, and marked by weeks and months. Linear and precisely measured concepts of time and space have been imposed subtly on a culture that knew of neither¹⁰⁹.

In addition, they explore the differences between traditional Inuit notions of their landscape and the invader’s predilection to measure distance. For the Inuits, “Scale or distance was not important but...could be marked off in ‘sleeps’ or days on the road” (669). Like the Inuits, Hogan relies on tribal views of space and distance. As discussed earlier, Hogan exhibits a healthy disdain for maps and instead relies on tribal wisdom. Through her characters’ journeys she “little by little” (Goehring and Stager 667) moves her characters out of a context that measures “concepts of time and space” (Goehring and Stager 667), and re-stitches them into tribal frameworks. Her characters’ “ancestors...showed...the directions for travel” (*Solar Storms* 189) and Angel became “confused about day and night” (*Solar Storms* 208). They rely on traditional methods for determining direction, distance, and the passing of time. Hogan reappropriates traditional tribal practices and incorporates them in new stories.

She re-imag(in)es an innovative method for removing social relations from a spatial context and re-stitching them to a tribal framework in her efforts to “[revise] contemporary reality”

¹⁰⁹ Brian Goehring and John K. Stager, “The Intrusion of Industrial Time and Space Into the Inuit Lifeworld,” *Environment and Behavior* 23.6 (1991): 667.

(Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* ix). In a self-referential plot Hogan's characters, particularly Nola and Omishto, carry out her vision of reconfiguring reality through stories. Interesting parallels can be drawn between her novels *Mean Spirit* and *Power*, between Ama and Grace, and between Nola and Omishto that reveal her intentions to alter her readers' perspectives of reality.

During another self-referential moment in *Power*, Hogan discloses one of the main themes found in her written works. Everything "is a sacrifice. It all is. This whole thing" (Hogan, *Power* 71). According to the author, re-stitching the tribal framework requires sacrifice. The Hill Indians' sacrifice of Grace and Nola and Ama's sacrifice are necessary for the implementation of the "world-healing telos of American Indian 'story'" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* 37). Their sacrifices commence the events that eventually result in the incorporation of new stories into tribal frameworks, which ensures the future of the tribes. Through Omishto, Hogan suggests that stories have healing and life altering powers. Omishto, towards the end of the novel *Power*, states that "Everyone has their theory. But these are only their stories and they need their stories, even if they aren't the truth. Stories are for people what water is for plants" (Hogan, *Power* 227). She claims that theories, which attempt to explain Truth and reality, are nothing more than one perspective of a story. The tribes' survival relies on the continual incorporation of multiple stories into their tribal frameworks.

According to Hogan, the stories must be a "mediation" (Ruppert 8) between multiple perspectives. The sacrifices of Ama and Grace illustrate that in order to revise "contemporary reality" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* ix) the stories must not be constrained by a narrow or "parochial" (Freire 159) worldview. Neither Ama nor Grace can save the tribes, but both become removed from their tribal contexts, which precipitates the survival of their respective tribes. Their sacrifices are necessary aspects of the tribe's healing ceremony in *Mean Spirit* and *Power*. Ama's self-sacrifice takes "down that wall" and allows the "world...[to] grow together again and become all the things it might have been" (*Power* 186) through Omishto. However, Ama exists too much as a part of the old ways, but her knowledge of old traditions is a crucial aspect of Omishto's story, and she teaches Omishto with "frogs behind her voice" (10). Even though Ama herself acknowledges that "the old ways are not enough to get us through this time" (Hogan, *Power* 22), she fails to assist her tribe in their efforts to understand the laws of the U.S. because she "was from another time when she came back" from the Taiga land at Kili Swamp "and...she's been out of place in this world ever since" (Hogan, *Power* 23). Ama lacks the knowledge of the modern world that the Taiga tribe must incorporate into its tribal framework in order to avoid experiencing the same fate that the Florida panther experiences. Ama's sacrifice, however, allows Omishto to take her place as the tribe's future. Omishto realizes that "our survival depends on who I am and who I will become" (Hogan, *Power* 161). Tribal healing only takes place once Ama's knowledge of the old traditions and Omishto's knowledge of the dominant social group combine. At the end of the novel, Omishto joins the Taiga old people in Kili swamp and her story takes its place in the tribal framework of the Taiga people ensuring the survival of the tribe.

While Ama cannot save her tribe because she reflects the old ways and cannot, herself, incorporate new stories into her tribal context, Grace cannot save the Hill Indians because she became enamoured of material trappings and "[enjoyed] the easy pleasures money could buy" (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 9). The Hill Indians sacrifice Grace in response to the "river's story" (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 5),

which warns Grace's mother that the Hill Indians have "got too far away from the Americans to know how their laws are cutting into our life" (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 6). Grace, however, embraces the materialist values of the invaders to a certain extent and so "hardly seemed like the salvation of the Hill Indians" (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 7). Discovery of oil on Grace's land does stop the building of the dam, but real salvation is found through her daughter Nola's child. Nola becomes part of the necessary ritual to heal her people. Her baby's Indian and white heritage symbolizes hope for the tribe. Like Omishto, who through Ama was able to provide knowledge of the dominant social group for her tribe, Grace's and Nola's sacrifices lead to events that enable the Hill Indians to begin to understand the western world. Nola, "born of the Hill Indians and able from childhood to speak the language of animals"¹¹⁰ carries a baby even though she knows that its "father is a bad man" (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 353). Through Nola, the author portrays the struggle that the American Indian community must experience in order to achieve balance between their tribal traditions and the dominant social group's version of reality. Like Nola, the tribal context must carry, contain, a baby, "[w]estern cultural traditions" (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3), even though its "father is...bad" (Hogan, *Mean Spirit* 353). The tribes' survival, according to the author, relies on their ability to incorporate experiences and stories about the dominant social group within their tribal frameworks. At the end of *Mean Spirit* the stories of the Watona inhabitants join with the mythical Hill People's stories as part of the Osage's tribal context and thus ensure the tribe's survival. Hogan, by writing about the historical murders of Osage Indians in Oklahoma in *Mean Spirit*, depicts how stories are recycled and incorporated into a tribal context that continually changes and adapts according to current circumstances.

Each of her three novels incorporates stories of ritual journeys¹¹¹. These journeys, through various literary techniques, shift the readers and characters into tribal narratives. Sorrow Cave takes part in a complex but critical spiritual journey that the characters embark on in *Mean Spirit*, which enables them to dissolve artificially created boundaries and to re-enter their tribal context. Andrea Musher argues, in her article, that Sorrow Cave acts as a crucial event in the novel. By this time, she believes that the author's readers have been inculcated into the tribal perspective and that their "mainstream, Judeo Christian values" have been subverted (Musher 24). Not only have Hogan's readers been introduced to a tribal perspective, but Hogan also liquefies spatial boundaries and re-stitches her readers, as well as her characters, to a tribal framework. At, what Musher terms, the "showdown at Sorrow Cave" (Musher 13), the Native American *community* resists the perceived social and spatial boundaries that the novel's authority figures, like Sheriff Gold, attempt to enforce. The authorities believe that the cave only has one entrance and that the Indians are trapped within the confines of the cave. However, with their knowledge of the bats, their observation of the ants, and the

¹¹⁰ Elizabeth Blair, "The Politics of Place in Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit*," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 6.1 (Fall 1994): 17.

¹¹¹ Each journey triggers the protagonists' rebirth into their respective tribal frameworks. The Indians of Watona experience rebirth through tribal activity at Sorrow Cave, Angel and her female relations experience rebirth during a journey through inaccurately mapped waterways, and Omishto and the Taiga Indians experience rebirth during a storm. Hogan attributes each ritual rebirth with vivid female birth images. The cave in *Mean Spirit* symbolizes the womb and the waterways and the floods symbolize birth fluid.

consolidation of the tribe, the characters escape. Even though “Michael Horse had previously discovered the existence of the interior caves, and Joe Billy had been told about them by his father...not until the community is assembled” and attuned to nature “can the ritual action transpire” (Musher 35). Tribal activity, combined with the tribe’s knowledge of nature, inspires the Indians escape, despite Sheriff Gold’s blockade.

In *Mean Spirit*, the characters of Watona, until they had begun to enter and accept the tribal framework and traditions, did not have access to the Hill Indians. Through their narrative journey the characters that live in Watona gradually incorporate more tribal wisdom and perceive their experiences through a tribal framework, which enables them to spend more and more time with the Hill Indians until the end of the novel when the Graycloud family joins the Hill Indians. The Hill Indians, “at the end of the novel...escort them [the inhabitants of Watona] into another, timeless realm beyond history” (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* 106). Symbolically, the Grayclouds move into a ceremonial and mythical context where “The night was on fire with their pasts and they were alive” (Hogan, *Mean Sprit* 375). The Hill Indians’ acceptance of the Graycloud family, Nola and her baby, the priest, and Horse symbolizes the incorporation of their experiences and stories into a tribal framework.

Angel Wing’s journey in *Solar Storms* takes place in the complex waterways between Adam’s Rib and the Fat Eater’s town. Before her journey, through her interaction with Bush and the other members of her tribe Angel gradually learns more about her tribe. Her story is a story of learning and healing, and in the middle of her story, at the center of the novel, she and her family begin a journey that prepares them for their resistance against the dominant social group’s authorities and spatial boundaries—the dams. In the waterways, they enter a mythic and ritual realm where “The time we’d been teasing apart, unraveled. And...we entered a kind of timelessness” (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 170). Here Angel learns to incorporate her tribal learning into her life and she “came alive” (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 170). Angel’s rebirth in the uncharted waterways taught her that “In these places things turned about and were other than what they seemed” (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 172). She learns not to trust her vision, which until now remained bound by a western worldview’s perception of reality. Her journey shifts her vision to a tribal perception based on nature’s laws. She “was under the spell of wilderness...Everything merged and united” (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 177) and she realizes that she “had been limited in ways” she “hadn’t even known” (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 189). In the waterways Angel enters a tribal framework through a ritual journey of healing. This enables her to join the Fat Eaters in their struggle against spatially configured barriers. These events ultimately precipitate her return to Adam’s Rib where her story becomes part of the tribal framework, and she realizes that she “walked into another day of creation, a beginning” (Hogan, *Solar Storms* 334).

In *Power*, Omishto’s story and ritual journey begins with a storm. According to Hogan’s description of Taiga traditional stories, “human people entered this world” through “the great storm” (Hogan 15). The storm that Omishto experiences after she sees the four singing women parallels “the great storm” (Hogan 15) in that it triggers the rebirth of the Taiga people. After the storm, Hogan attributes Omishto with baby-like characteristics, which symbolically illustrates her rebirth: Omishto is “naked” (Hogan 39) and mute (Hogan 42). The storm indicates the beginning of Omishto’s rebirth and ritual journey (story), and it initiates a sequence of events that lead to the death of the panther,

Ama's banishment from the tribe, Omishto's understanding of balance, and finally culminates in her story's acceptance into the tribal framework.

The hurricane's "Oni," or wind, "enters us all at birth and...connects us to every other creature" (Hogan, *Power* 28). The storm's wind connects Omishto to a tribal context and to nature, and allows Omishto to fulfill her role as "the future" (Hogan, *Power* 161) of her tribe; therefore, the tribe experiences rebirth through Omishto's story. Amy Baria claims that "The storm severs contact with civilization, blocking roads and disabling power lines" (Baria 68), and as a result Omishto later "dismisses the outside world from her needs" (Baria 70). It initiates Omishto's journey and allows her to incorporate tribal wisdom into her life, which until the storm largely consisted of western signs and perceptions, by erasing her ties to U.S. laws and the dominant social group's perceptions; however, Hogan also emphasizes the significance that Omishto's knowledge of other social groups has for the survival of the tribe. Hogan's novel *Power* reinforces Rainwater's belief "that 'story' shapes 'reality' (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* xi). Omishto's story reshapes her perceptions of reality, the Taiga people's tribal context, and affects the survival of the Taiga tribe.

The storm leads to Omishto's rejection of an Euroamerican perspective of reality and her initiation into the Taiga's tribal context. It also results in the ritual hunt of the panther in *Power*, which is a necessary component of Omishto's rebirth and acceptance into the Taiga tribal framework. Omishto's "post-hurricane experience with Ama and the Florida panther will alter the way she evaluates reality, allowing her the freedom to accept the magical as part of her Native culture" (Baria 68), and it causes her to "[fall] headlong into the natural world the Taiga share with the panther" (Baria 70). During the ceremonial hunt Omishto becomes disoriented to linear time and distance, much like Angel's journey through the waterways in *Solar Storms*. The hunt causes "Time and knowing" to "lose their rigidity as Omishto loses her affinity for the modern world" (Baria 69). The storm erases spatial barriers like time and distance. Omishto remains unsure of her location and the passage of time as Ama hunts the panther. She becomes disoriented to "how much time has passed" (Hogan, *Power* 53) and during the trial, when questioned about where the panther was killed she does not know "precisely" where she was (Hogan, *Power* 122). Maps, boundaries, and time cease to have meaning for Omishto once she enters the wider tribal and ceremonial framework of the Taiga people.

Before the storm that begins Omishto's journey, she sees and hears four messenger women "singing slow and then fast...so fast it is powerful and mighty enough to sing the dead straight up from the ground," and Omishto "can feel the song in...[her] stomach as they float above the road" (Hogan, *Power* 25). The surreal description of the women forces Hogan's readers to question whether the women are material or mythical beings. When they appear again later in the novel, Omishto believes that if she "could touch them...they'd be solid...and they would smell like clean water and wet earth (Hogan, *Power* 234). Hogan simultaneously links the women to nature with her earth images and to traditions and ceremonies through their singing, all of which remain integral aspects of a tribal milieu. Hogan, through Omishto's claims that she "could touch them" (Hogan, *Power* 234), emphasizes the very real role, historically and currently, that tribal traditions have within fluid and dynamic tribal frameworks. The women appear again at the end of the novel to escort her to the tribal "place above Kili" with "Their rattles shaking so much louder than the insects...so strong in their old dresses, singing their old songs" (*Power* 234). While the women appear at the *conclusion* of the

novel; in a circular manner they again mark the *beginning* of Omishto's new story. The appearance of these four women serves ceremonially to begin Omishto's endless and timeless story, which indicates the story's position within the mythic and ritual tribal framework.

In each of Hogan's three novels, the protagonists leave 'civilization' and join the mythical characters. This could be construed as a rejection of a western worldview, or as a romantic yearning for a return to the days before Native America's colonization. Neither of these two scenarios would have the power to alter "contemporary reality" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* ix). Hogan's project is far more complex. Her group of protagonists consists mostly of people of mixed ethnicity, and Hogan depicts their shift from a western worldview to a tribal framework as an instrumental component of tribal survival. The characters' mixed heritage illustrates her belief that, in order for tribal traditions to survive, American Indian tribes must incorporate both ways of knowing in their traditions and stories. For example, Omishto's return to the Taiga secures the tribe's survival. Throughout *Power*, Omishto learns balance between right and wrong and how to successfully synthesize her different ways of knowing, and Hogan depicts the incorporation of Omishto's story as crucial for the tribe's continued existence. The endings of Hogan's novels, rather than demonstrating an unrealistic longing for a return to the 'old ways', remain relevant today: through her books she "revisions contemporary reality" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* ix).

Tribal wisdom stems from the multiple perspectives and stories of individual tribal members. It relies on perspectives steeped in past experience, tradition, nature, and myth. Hogan's stories enable her characters and her readers to enter a tribal framework through ritual journeys and healing ceremonies. Through stories, they "[walk] into another day of creation, a beginning" (*Solar Storms* 334). The end of her novels represent a new beginning in her efforts to "[affect] the 'real'" (Rainwater 139). Through her stories' links to nature, ancestors, and 'living' traditions, the end of her stories circle around and become the beginnings of new stories with "yet undisclosed future[s]" (Rainwater 46) in a 'living' tribal context.

Chapter 2: Instances of Inter- and Intratextual Links in N. Scott Momaday's and Leslie Marmon Silko's Narratives

Why Nature Heals: The Importance of Land in the Written Narratives of N. Scott Momaday and Leslie Marmon Silko

As in Linda Hogan's novels, land and nature play a crucial role in the writings of N. Scott Momaday and Leslie Marmon Silko; however, the manner in which they depict nature differs from Hogan's as does the function of nature in their various novels. Most critics agree that "Silko uses nature not only to define the characters' landscapes", but also to "show how those landscapes are symbolically linked to the hero's regeneration" and "to relate the very essence of human existence"¹¹². Despite the consensus that nature heals Silko's characters and the crucial role that it plays in most American Indian narratives, rarely do the critics question how or why the characters' relationship with (boundary-less) nature heals. Like their contemporaries, Momaday and Silko use their narratives to destabilize and disrupt spatially constructed boundaries and barriers. In "Laguna Prototypes of Manhood in *Ceremony*," Edith Swan argues that "Prison camps are jails like internment camps. Internment camps are like reservations and asylums, places to fence in those a given society deems undesirable"¹¹³. Momaday's, Silko's, and their contemporaries' writings contest the boundaries that define their reservations as they combine their tribal knowledge with their academic training. The authors write narratives to resist and question reservation boundaries, which according to Rainwater's definition in her article "The Semiotics of Dwelling in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*" are "site[s] of 'contradictory versions of the world,' ...[they are] on the one hand, 'reserved' as a space where Native American culture may flourish or at least prevail; on the other hand...the 'reservation' is a place where Indians are held 'in reserve' until such a time as they may serve the economic interests of the dominant culture"¹¹⁴. Although the books act as a place "where Native American culture may flourish", by their very existence and the nature of their publication they collapse the boundaries that hold them "in reserve" (Rainwater, "The Semiotics of Dwelling" 228).

¹¹² Lee Schweninger, "Writing Nature: Silko and Native Americans as Nature Writers," *MELUS* 18.2 (1992): 52.

¹¹³ Edith Swan, "Laguna Prototypes of Manhood in *Ceremony*" *MELUS* 17.1 (1991-92): 47.

¹¹⁴ Catherine Rainwater, "The Semiotics of Dwelling in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*," *The American Journal of Semiotics* 9.2-3 (1992): 228.

Their characters also transgress reservation boundaries through their stories, actions, and their links to nature. Silko's *Ceremony*¹¹⁵ and Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*¹¹⁶ both revolve around young Native American veterans whose "return to the reservation" after World War II "does not guarantee their reintegration"¹¹⁷ into their tribes and their struggle to heal their "separation from the land"¹¹⁸. *Storyteller*¹¹⁹, Silko's next written piece, is a compilation of prose and poetry seemingly unlike her other written works, but which remains tied to her other works through myth, subject, theme, and style. *Almanac of the Dead*, as Annette Van Dyke points out, "takes the story of witchery that appears in the center of *Ceremony*..., elaborates, and extends it until it becomes the whole"¹²⁰. Unlike *Almanac of the Dead*, which centers around "the prophecy about the appearance and eventual disappearance of Europeans" (Van Dyke, "From Big Green Fly to the Stone Serpent" 36), Silko's newest novel, *Gardens in the Dunes*¹²¹, focuses on the experiences of two sisters from the fictional Sand Lizard tribe, Sister Salt and Indigo. Silko's characters in this book, Indigo in particular, work in conjunction with Europeans who choose to return to their ancient reverence for and relationship with nature:

Silko examines systems of thought that underlie Western patriarchal culture's oppression of women, indigenous peoples, animals, and earth, and explores ways that the exploited and powerless can join together across artificial national and cultural boundaries against the forces of destruction fueled by the drive to possess and catalogue, control and produce.¹²²

Gardens in the Dunes, like Hogan's *Power*, examines the importance of relationships between family members, human and animal, and human to nature, to name a few. Momaday's *The Ancient Child*¹²³ follows the rituals surrounding two characters' "Set and Grey's mutual transformation" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* 82) through a myth concerning a bear-child. These six books written by Silko and Momaday in many ways reflect the claims that Paula Gunn Allen makes in her article "The Psychological Landscape of *Ceremony*," that "the land and the People are the same"¹²⁴ and Lee Schweninger's claims in his article "Writing Nature: Silko and Native Americans as Nature Writers" that "nature and the story are one" (58). As crucial and inseparable components of their work, land

¹¹⁵ Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977).

¹¹⁶ N. Scott Momaday, *House Made of Dawn* (London: Harper & Row, 1968).

¹¹⁷ John Scenters-Zapico, "Cross-Cultural Mediation: Language, Storytelling, History, and Self as Enthymematic Premises in the Novels of N. Scott Momaday," *American Indian Quarterly* 21.3 (1997): 507.

¹¹⁸ Robert M. Nelson, "Snake and Eagle: Abel's Disease and the Landscape of *House Made of Dawn*" *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 1.2 (1989): 5.

¹¹⁹ Leslie Marmon Silko, *Storyteller* (New York: Arcade Publishing, Inc., 1981).

¹²⁰ Annette Van Dyke, "From Big Green Fly to the Stone Serpent: Following the Dark Vision in Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 10.3 (Fall 1998): 34.

¹²¹ Leslie Marmon Silko, *Gardens in the Dunes* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999).

¹²² Ellen Arnold, "Gardens in the Dunes," rev. of *Gardens in the Dunes* by Leslie Marmon Silko, *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 11.2 (Summer 1999): 103.

¹²³ N. Scott Momaday, *The Ancient Child* (New York: HarperCollins, 1989).

¹²⁴ Paula Gunn Allen, "The Psychological Landscape of *Ceremony*," *American Indian Quarterly* 5.1 (1979): 7.

and nature in the novels illustrate and aid the authors' projects to problematize narratives of space based on "[w]estern cultural traditions" (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3).

In *Ceremony*, sand, as part of nature, illustrates Silko's belief in the dynamic and boundless nature of land. Silko depicts sand in many forms and with different functions. Robert Nelson claims that "we need only know how the land itself is configured in order to enter the world of the novel"¹²⁵. Through sand, Silko depicts the characteristics of the land. These various images of sand are often contradictory; at the beginning of the novel the sand that chokes Tayo represents stagnancy or stasis, which signifies that his "illness is a result of separation from the ancient unity of person with land" (Allen, "The Psychological Landscape of *Ceremony*" 7), but by the end of the novel sand is the boundary-less zone where all the life patterns and stories converge and "his healing is a result of his recognition of this oneness" (Allen, "The Psychological Landscape of *Ceremony*" 7). Silko uses the sand to break down the spatially configured boundaries and to re-educate Tayo and the people (including the readers) who Paula Gunn Allen claims "have been tricked into believing that the land is beyond themselves" ("The Psychological Landscape of *Ceremony*" 7). A propensity to abstract, as discussed earlier in the thesis, leads to a perception of land as empty space to acquire: something separate from our existence. Silko uses sand to illustrate the transitory characteristics of nature and the relationship between humans and land, which she depicts in the novel through Tayo's preoccupation, and emerging relationship, with the sand and the fragile imprints made on it. The main character Tayo fights for survival and searches for his niche in the world as a man of mixed blood heritage through the ceremonies and stories which Silko links to the image of sand.

In *Ceremony*, Silko portrays various mediums of sand to illustrate the dynamic characteristics of nature. She describes the sand as "washed pale and smooth by rainwater and wind" (220-21), "dark wet sand...quicksand" (235), "[d]amp yellow sand" (111), and "dirt" (21). Tayo, until he learns to adapt to and accept the various and yet united facets of the land, will not survive to make his imprint. The various images of sand in this novel act as a mirror of "Tayo's illness" (Allen, "The Psychological Landscape of *Ceremony*" 7). Silko often alludes to the prevailing "drought" (*Ceremony* 22) and constantly describes the sky as "dense with red dust" (19). This drought motif creates a surreal effect that reflects the absolute despair and hopelessness that Tayo feels, and only when Tayo begins to complete the ceremony does the world become "alive" (221) to Tayo again. The sand, at times, seems to overwhelm Tayo in his dreams. Silko depicts one dream as "dark wet sand, shifting above water, quicksand with no bottom or top, no edges; it had quivered and heaved in spasms until he choked" (235). At this point in the novel, the sand represents the temporary paralysis that pervades Tayo's life, and his inability to adapt or accept the world's lack of boundaries. Tayo has yet to be exposed to the ceremony or to the stories, and therefore he has no tools to deal with the boundlessness of nature.

At the beginning of the novel, the only stories that dominate Tayo's mind are those of war and death; this state of stasis chokes Tayo in another dream:

¹²⁵ Robert M. Nelson, "Place and Vision: The Function of Landscape in *Ceremony*" *Journal of the Southwest* 30.3 (1988): 283.

Damp yellow sand choking him, filling his nostrils first, and then his eyes as he struggled against it, fought to keep his eyes open to see. Sand rippled and swirled in his dream, enclosing his head, yellow sand and shadows filling his mouth until his body was full and still. (*Ceremony* 111)

Silko depicts the sand choking Tayo because he fails to accept or understand the shifting nature of "the very essence of human existence" (Schweninger 52), which, according to Silko, relies on balance. In *Ceremony*, "Balance is not static; it is lived in the flux of daily existence, recreated constantly"¹²⁶. His inability, or unwillingness, to understand his role in the tribe and in the cosmos stems from his lack of understanding that "Land and human both participate in the same kind of being, for both are thoughts in the mind of Grandmother Spider" (Allen, "The Psychological Landscape of *Ceremony*" 11). The earthiness of the sand contrasts to Tayo, who exists as "an empty space as the tale begins—a vapor, an outline. Uni-dimensional, bi-dimensional [*sic*], he floats" (Allen, "The Psychological Landscape of *Ceremony*" 8). Initially Tayo attempts to cure himself by thinking of "something that existed by itself, standing alone like a deer....but...it would...become the deer he and Rocky had hunted" (*Ceremony* 7) and by attempting "to vomit that image from his head because it was Rocky's smiling face from a long time before" (*Ceremony* 18). He vomits in an attempt to purge memories of Josiah, his time with Rocky, and the stories. He tries to abstract himself from his past, and therefore from his present and his future too, for "the old stories, the war stories, their stories...become the story that was still being told" (*Ceremony* 246). The sand continues to choke him in his dreams because he rejects his connection to the land and opts for abstraction and separation.

His illness started before the war with his separation from his tribal context through schooling. School "causes him to see reality in a way that is damaging to him" (Allen, "The Psychological Landscape of *Ceremony*" 11) by separating him from Josiah through whom "Tayo and Rocky learn[ed]...tasks pertaining to livestock, horsemanship and hunting" (Swan, "Laguna Prototypes of Manhood in *Ceremony*" 41) and "who tells Tayo and Rocky the traditional stories of the Laguna people and so provides them with the Indian world view" (Rainwater, "The Semiotics of Dwelling" 234). Before the war he understood and believed the stories:

He believed then that touching the sky had to do with where you were standing and how the clouds were that day. He had believed that on certain nights, when the moon rose full and wide as a corner of the sky, a person standing on the high sandstone cliff of that mesa could reach the moon. Distances and days existed in themselves then; they all had a story. They were not barriers. If a person wanted to get to the moon, there was a way; it all depended on whether you knew the directions...He had believed in the stories for a long time, until the teachers at Indian school taught him not to believe in that kind of 'nonsense.' (*Ceremony* 19)

Yet, despite the 'social' training he received in school, in the jungle he realizes that "they [the teachers] had been wrong. Josiah had been there, in the jungle; he had come" (19). War, for Silko, represents the ultimate separation of human from nature and the ultimate betrayal against the interconnectedness of all living things, including the earth. War and the atomic bomb, which the government created "deep in the Jemez Mountains....surrounded by high electric fences," represent

¹²⁶ Linda L. Danielson, "Storyteller: Grandmother Spider's Web," *Journal of the Southwest* 30.3 (1988): 343-44.

"the fate the destroyers planned for all of them, for all living things" (*Ceremony* 246). The colonization of the American Indians at the hands of the settlers of Native America led to a legacy "of creating boundaries between 'us' and 'them'"¹²⁷. The belief in earth as "dead Other which supplies us with a sense of I by virtue of its unbeing" (Allen, "The Psychological Landscape of *Ceremony*" 7) manifest itself in war. Tayo recognizes that, through his participation in the war, he collaborates in the perpetuation of a discourse that advocates abstraction rather than connection. This knowledge leads to his illness because he recognizes that killing "the Japanese soldiers" is the same as "killing the Laguna" (Swan, "Laguna Prototypes of Manhood in *Ceremony*" 43), and as a Japanese soldier died he knew "he watched his uncle fall, and he *knew* it was Josiah" (*Ceremony* 8). These events lead to his need to purge himself of the past.

Tayo links sand to bad memories early in his childhood and Silko threads this motif throughout the book to depict the various stages he experiences on his ceremonial journey. Tayo's dominant memory of his mother's death is the image of the wind which "blew gusts of sand past the house and rattled the loose tin on the roof. He never forgot that sound and the sand" (*Ceremony* 93). By linking sand to this negative death image, Silko is setting up the foundation for one function of sand in the novel. Initially Tayo feels like "invisible scattered smoke...[he] was only an outline too" (14). Tayo tries to separate himself from material reality because if he remains connected then he assumes responsibility for Josiah's death. Silko initially represents Tayo as feeling "hollow inside" (15), as if he has been pulled apart or fragmented by the war. The drought literally sucks the life out of nature, but figuratively it indicates the dryness and stagnancy of Tayo's disconnected existence. Even a barrel fails to escape immunity from the effects of the drought; "[t]he dry air shrank the wooden staves of the barrels; they pulled loose" (10) just as Tayo pulls loose and fragments. The effect of Tayo's emotional drought is mirrored by sand and the effect of the drought on nature because, as discussed earlier, "the land and the People are the same" (Allen, "The Psychological Landscape of *Ceremony*" 7). The livestock is affected adversely by the lack of rain; "[d]rought years shrank the hide tighter to the bones" (*Ceremony* 25). These images figuratively represent Tayo's deterioration, which is caused by the war.

According to Silko, the drought also exists as a direct result of the atomic explosion at White Sands. This atomic explosion becomes the symbol for the ultimate destroyer: a modern destroyer that renders the old ceremonies ineffective. In a manner of speaking, the dust created by the atomic explosion represents modern warfare, which remains the root of Tayo's illness. Tayo knows that "Ku'oosh would have looked at the dismembered corpses and the atomic heat-flash outlines, where human bodies had evaporated" and known that "[n]ot even oldtime witches killed like that" (37). The explosion at White Sands and the war remain the reasons for the pervasive drought that symbolically mirrors Tayo's emotional drought because "apocalypse suggest the destruction of the earth and the unraveling of the Pueblo culture"¹²⁸. Silko depicts the damage done to nature through the drought, which represents, on a larger scale, the damage done to Tayo. Silko uses this state of stasis to

¹²⁷ Gloria Bird, "Toward a Decolonization of the Mind and Text 1: Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*," *Wicazo-Sa Review* 9.2 (1993): 6.

¹²⁸ Karen Piper, "Police Zones: Territory and Identity in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*," *American Indian Quarterly* 21.3 (1997): 484.

represent the need for change in the attitudes and ceremonies of Native Americans. Josiah teaches Tayo that the drought merely exists as a part of the cycle of life:

These dry years you hear some people complaining, you know, about the dust and the wind, and how dry it is. But the wind and the dust, they are part of life too....The old people used to say that droughts happen when people forget, when people misbehave. (Ceremony 46)

Silko argues that this drought is part of life's cycle and that it must be incorporated into new ceremonies and stories. Towards the end of his story, after he successfully recovers Josiah's stolen cattle, Tayo accepts balance, which Silko depicts through his acceptance of death, again associated with sand. Rather than viewing death, which Silko earlier linked to sand through his mother's death, as a boundary that chokes life he views it as continuance. When he returns to the ranch, "The gray mule was gone, his bones unfolding somewhere on the red dirt, bleaching white and thin in the sun" (Ceremony 219). Through death and decomposition, sand and human truly unite. Death, like drought, is part of life's cycle.

Silko links sand, as a product of earth, to tradition, ceremonies, and stories through the medicine men Ku'oosh and Betonie who serve to emphasize both the fragile and powerful aspects of life. The medicine man Ku'oosh uses the example of "spider webs woven across paths through sand hills" to portray the truth that "this world is fragile" (Ceremony 35). Although the indentations that spiders and, through analogy, humans leave on the sand are transitory in nature and easily destroyed, the spider web has an inherent strength in its intricate pattern. The medicine man, through his analogy of the spider web, reminds Tayo of "something in the old stories. It took only one person to tear away the delicate strands of the web" (Ceremony 38). According to Silko, there is a delicate balance of strength and fragility inherent in the relationship between life and the land, and this relationship depends on change and is destroyed if a state of stasis exists. Betonie's "sand painting," which contains "the warning that the new ceremonies were not like the old ones; but he had never said they were not complete, only different" (Ceremony 233-4), relies on the basic relationship between strength and fragility but changes the ceremony through a different utilization of sand. While both of the medicine men's ceremonies deal with sand as "connect[ing] them to the earth" (Ceremony 104), Ku'oosh's image predominantly deals with the fragility of life while Betonie's sand painting depicts strength through the mountains. Sand is the primary material that forms the "sandrock foothills" (117) indigenous to the region. Sand, a material usually subject to the wind to shape and mold it, can assume many different forms, one of which is the form of mountains that transcend time and are generally impervious to natural forces. According to Silko, "[t]he mountains outdistanced their destruction just as love had outdistanced death" (219). Betonie's sand painting depicts the strength of the mountain, and due to Tayo's oneness with the land he acquires the strength of the mountain (along with the other forms that sand assumes) and therefore sand becomes one aspect of the ceremony that "brings him into touch, intimate contact, with the land" (Nelson, "Place and Vision" 295). Sand acts as a reaffirmation of life for Tayo. The very earthiness of sand reconfirms Tayo's existence. The ceremonial sand painting consists of "a dark mountain range...blue...yellow mountains" and a "white mountain range" (Ceremony 141-42). While strength dominates as the prevailing image of the sand painting, the subjection of the sand to the whims of nature lends an underlying strand of fragility to

the ceremony. These various colors¹²⁹ of mountains represent the different stages of the ceremony that Tayo must finish in order to be whole.

Silko uses sand as a material reality that ties Tayo to the land. Tayo witnesses various animals leaving their imprint on the sand: "The spider...retraced her path, leaving faint crisscrossing patterns in the fine yellow sand" (*Ceremony* 94), "the delicate edges of dust the [mountain lion's] paw prints had made, deep round imprints, each toe a distinctive swirl" (196), and "the arching tracks the snake left in the sand" (221). Each life impacts on the earth, as depicted through each animal that leaves imprints in the sand. Tayo realizes that a lack of imprint in the sand parallels a lack of existence. Tayo desperately looks "for an imprint of her [Ts'eh]...in the sand....what if there were no traces of her, no lines of sand pressed by her body" (222)? Tayo's preoccupation with these imprints stems from what Paula Gunn Allen, in "The Psychological Landscape of *Ceremony*," describes as "disordered thinking" (11) that tricks him into believing that he exists separate from the land and therefore fails to leave an imprint. Tayo feels "flat like a drawing in the sand which did not speak or move, waiting for the wind to come swirling along the ground and blow the lines away" (*Ceremony* 106). Tayo's initial inability to recognize his connection to the land translates into his inability to form an imprint.

The various aspects of sand in the novel function to create a picture of the different aspects of life and ceremony. Tayo begins to recognize the various aspects and functions of sand, which parallels his relationship to the land. The acquisition of this knowledge causes him to realize that "Gathering the spotted cattle was only one color of sand falling from the fingertips; the design was still growing, but already long ago it had encircled him" (*Ceremony* 196). The author points out that many grains of sand come together to form the overall picture. The ceremony contains many facets that Tayo must complete to heal his relationship with the land. The cattle represent an aspect of the ceremony and their search for water parallels Tayo's search for life in the community and as part of the people/land.

Emo, Pinkie, Leroy, and Harley are not liminal characters, they're full-blooded Native Americans and represent stasis in the community. These veterans serve as a contrast to Tayo who represents change and salvation from stasis. Tayo reaches an epiphany through his ceremony:

[they] are afraid...[they] feel something happening, they can see something happening around them, and it scares them. Indians or Mexicans or whites—most people are afraid of change. They think that if their children have the same color of skin, the same color of eyes, that nothing is changing. (*Ceremony* 99-100)

His links to a dynamic land support his function as a dynamic character. This promise of the benefits of change is depicted by Josiah's decision to crossbreed the cattle to produce a strain that has the

¹²⁹ Many critics discuss the significance of the colors to the Laguna. Catherine Rainwater's article "The Semiotics of Dwelling in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*" claims that blue, for example, "equals woman equals earth" (226) and that "Blue appears most often in rituals concerned with healing disharmonious relationships with the earth" (225). Edith Swan points out that the yellow gains significance "since it conveys the Laguna notion of personhood as well as the identity of the clan name." Edith Swan, "Laguna Symbolic Geography and Silko's *Ceremony*," *American Indian Quarterly* 12.3 (1988): 239.

strength of the traditional cow and the speed and instincts of the Spanish breed¹³⁰. Tayo, as a character, remains intimately linked with the cattle. According to Silko, lives and the earth meld and there is no clear delineation of where the "body ended and the sand began" (*Ceremony* 222). This mesh between the human and the land, human and animal, collapses spatial barriers and results in the interweaving of stories and individuals into a collective whole and creates a community. The ceremony leads Tayo to an epiphany and he is able to understand the nature of the land and his place in it:

the lines of cultures and worlds were drawn in flat dark lines on fine light sand, converging in the middle of witchery's final ceremonial sand painting. From that time on, human beings were one clan again, united by the fate the destroyers planned for all of them, for all living things; united by a circle of death. (246).

According to Silko, all of the imprints in the sand converge into one common destiny in the universe: all life faces the same fate. Tayo no longer exists as an abstracted character but as part of all mankind, and he finally understands his function in the larger design:

He cried the relief he felt at finally seeing the pattern, the way all the stories fit together—the old stories, the war stories, their stories—to become the story that was still being told....He had only seen and heard the world as it always was: no boundaries, only transitions through all distance and time. (246).

Tayo understands that each living creature's impact on the sand/earth unite to form a collective experience which transcends time and space. After the hoop ceremony, as he begins his journey he notices the "snow, blurring the boundaries between the earth and the sky" (*Ceremony* 207). Robert Bell claims that "[f]rom this point forward, Silko rarely describes earth and sky separately"¹³¹. As Tayo heals through his connection with the earth, Silko's imagery of the landscape also changes. The boundaries begin to break down.

The more intimate contact that Tayo experiences with the earth the more he relies on nature, and as a result spatial boundaries disintegrate. Many critics agree with Edith Swan's assertion in her article "Laguna Symbolic Geography and Silko's *Ceremony*" that "Through women, Tayo is connected to the land" (246) and that in fact "woman equals earth" (Rainwater, "The Semiotics of Dwelling" 226). *Ceremony* blurs the distinctions, the boundaries, between material woman and mother earth through Tayo's relationship with Ts'eh. She represents part of the hoop ceremony¹³², which teaches him that "there were no boundaries; the world below and the sand paintings inside became the same that night" (*Ceremony* 145). As Yellow Woman, she ritually links Tayo to the

¹³⁰ The cattle, through their mixed heritage, are also connected to the earth and therefore their experiences mirror Tayo's experiences. Their further significance and potential will be discussed in further detail later in the chapter.

¹³¹ Robert C. Bell, "Circular Design in *Ceremony*," *American Indian Quarterly* 5.1 (1979): 51.

¹³² Robert Bell's article "Circular Design in *Ceremony*" describes the "hoop transformation ceremony" that Betonie performs. He claims that "the hoops, commonly used in exorcistic transformation rites among the Pueblo and Navajo, represent a space so narrowed down that it is under ceremonial control" (49). More than that, the area within the hoops collapses into the area that Tayo travels in his ceremonial journey. They are one and the same.

Laguna and therefore to the land. Nelson, in "Place and Vision: The Function of Landscape in *Ceremony*" discusses the images surrounding their lovemaking:

We can see the connection between the lady and the land in the account (filtered through Tayo's evolving awareness) of his lovemaking with her, an event during which her body takes shape in Tayo's consciousness as a landscape, while his sense of his own relationship to her takes shape in the language of geographical awareness: 'He was afraid of being lost, so he repeated trail marks to himself[...]. He eased himself deeper within her and felt the warmth close around him like river sand, softly giving way under foot, then closing firmly around the ankle in cloudy warm water. (292)

Clearly, the boundaries between bodies and land dissolve in this scene. Through Tayo's language, Ts'eh becomes earth: again through the image of sand. Edith Swan asserts that "Ts'eh is the initial homophone in two crucial Laguna words: *Ts'its'tsi'nako*, Spider Woman, and *Tse-pi'na*, Mount Taylor" ("Laguna Symbolic Geography" 244). Through Ts'eh, the two images mentioned by Ku'oosh and Betonie unite: contesting boundaries between old and new. She combines both the fragility of Grandmother Spider's thought design—life—and the strength of Betonie's mountain. Through her, Tayo achieves balance. She also blurs the "line between what is real and what is magical"¹³³. She takes physical shape as she teaches him "about the roots and plants she had gathered" (*Ceremony* 224), and "yet...[she] also seem[s] to be...[a materialization] or...[embodiment] of the spirit world" (Truesdale 220). She exists "as a link between the visible and invisible"¹³⁴. Ts'eh, on many levels, blurs and contests spatial boundaries.

In *Almanac of the Dead*, the link between woman and land, indeed human to land, seems lost or at least hidden. The prophesy in *Ceremony* that "human beings were one clan again, united by the fate the destroyers planned for all of them...united by a circle of death" (246) seems to manifest itself in *Almanac of the Dead*. Sterling, a member of the Laguna Pueblo tribe, observes that the "people he had been used to calling 'Mexicans' were really remnants of different kinds of Indians. But what had remained of what was Indian was in appearance only—the skin and the hair and the eyes....They had lost contact with their tribes and their ancestors' worlds" (*Almanac of the Dead* 88). Another character, Lecha, realizes that "the loss was their connection with the earth" (*Almanac of the Dead* 718). The separation from the tribal context that Sterling and Lecha note pervades Silko's narrative and informs the lives of her characters. One character, Zeta, "had been adamant about the security systems and fences. She did not want them to interfere with the trails she took for her walks....The trails themselves extended out of another time" (*Almanac of the Dead* 177). She attempts to enclose the past in an attempt to preserve it, which is a futile effort, as seen in *Ceremony* the past and present remain inseparable, and an unnecessary effort because "the earth would go on, the earth would outlast anything man did to it" (*Almanac of the Dead* 718). She fails to accept her ties to tribal wisdom and integrate her grandmother Yoeme's claims about the earth (quoted above), and so she erects spatial barriers to cordon off her land from the rest. The separation of the characters from their tribal

¹³³ C. W. Truesdale, "Tradition in *Ceremony*: Leslie Marmon Silko as an American Novelist," *North Dakota Quarterly* 59.4 (1991): 220.

¹³⁴ Naomi R. Rand, "Surviving What Haunts You: The Art of Invisibility in *Ceremony*, *The Ghost*, and *Beloved*," *MELUS* 20.3 (1995): 24.

contexts results in their separation from the land, from their ancestors, and from each other. As with Tayo's illness, Silko blames this separation from their tribal ties to the earth on "sending the children away to boarding schools" (*Almanac of the Dead* 87), which caused the children "to learn what they could about the kachinas and the ways to pray or greet the deer, other animals, and plants during summer vacations which were too short" (*Almanac of the Dead* 87-8). Education abstracts Native American children from their tribal contexts and stories about "time immemorial" (*Ceremony* 95) and inculcates them into an Euroamerican worldview through "science books" that "explained the causes and effects" (*Ceremony* 94). Formal, institutional, education remains based on divisions and categorizations, "causes and effects" (*Ceremony* 94), rather than on unity. A western education directly contradicts Native American stories and traditions:

But old Grandma always used to say, 'Back in time immemorial, things were different, the animals could talk to human beings and many magical things still happened.' He [Tayo] never lost the feeling he had in his chest when she spoke those words, as she did each time she told them stories; and he still felt it was true, *despite all they had taught him in school* [emphasis added]—that long ago things *had* been different, and human beings could understand what the animals said. (*Ceremony* 94-5)

In *Almanac of the Dead*, the characters remain abstracted from the stories that link them to the land and to each other. Van Dyke, in "From Big Green Fly to the Stone Serpent: Following the Dark Vision in Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*," argues that "there is no nurturing, life restoring spirit" (38) in *Almanac of the Dead*. The characters remain separated, or abstracted, from their ties to the earth.

Unlike *Ceremony*, *Almanac* lacks the regenerative links between women and the earth. Through motherhood, the physical boundaries between one person and another conflate into unity. Motherhood is also indicative of tribal ties to the earth for, as shown in *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*, "the land is mother to us all" (Allen 119). The relationship between earth and human mirrors the relationship between mother and child. Neither of the two main maternal figures, Seese or Lecha, fulfill their roles as mothers. Motherhood represents perhaps the most intimate physical tie between two people. In *Almanac of the Dead*, "Lecha abandoned Ferro, her son" (19), and Seese severs her relationship with one child through abortion and her other son Monte is kidnapped. Yoeme, Lecha and Zeta's grandmother, also "had abandoned her children" (*Almanac of the Dead* 114). The separation between mother and child remains indicative of the severed relationship between the earth and the characters of *Almanac* and represents the lack of a generative life-giving source in the narrative. Sterling's relationship with his Aunt Marie represents the only healing maternal-like bond throughout the narrative. When Sterling faces banishment from the tribe, his Aunt Marie dies:

He [Sterling] believed Aunt Marie had calculated her death to shame the Council into reversing its decision. But the shock of having killed an old woman had been so great the Tribal Council had felt compelled to point the blame elsewhere. (*Almanac of the Dead* 97)

His aunt's death signifies something more than a calculated attempt to alter his banishment. The fact that her death coincides with his banishment from the tribe represents the severance of his ties to his tribal context and therefore to land. Despite the fact that "he was hired to be the gardener" (*Almanac of the Dead* 22) for Zeta and maintains his ties to the land through his job, there "the earth herself was

almost a stranger" (*Almanac of the Dead* 36) to Sterling. Silko uses his Aunt Marie's death to illustrate the separation between the earth and her characters.

In *Ceremony*, sex with the female earth spirit Ts'eh reconnected Tayo to the earth. Sex with woman equals union with the land as discussed earlier in this chapter. In *Almanac of the Dead*, sex has lost its regenerative and healing purposes. Most of the characters engage in sex that could not result in reproduction, and therefore they strip sex of its life giving function. One character, Judge Arne, is depicted as "merrily penetrating his own basset hound" (*Almanac of the Dead* 460); his grandfather had "slipped his hard dick into the milk cow's heifer tied and hobbled in the barn" (*Almanac of the Dead* 657); Beaufrey, Eric, David, Judge Arne, Ferro, Jamey, and others are homosexuals and therefore unlikely to reproduce; and Serlo, like his grandfather, "practiced only masturbation into steel cylinders where his semen was frozen for future use" (*Almanac of the Dead* 547). Silko links these men to other men or to deviant sexual encounters with animals. Most of them avoid contact with women and therefore with the land and healing. For many of the women in *Almanac of the Dead* sex means little and fails to heal as well; Lecha engages in sexual liaisons with many men, but Silko equates Lecha with death not life, for her gift of seeing only pertains to the dead, and "They are all dead. The only ones you can locate are the dead. Murder victims and suicides. You can't locate the living" (*Almanac of the Dead* 138); Zeta "was not interested in anything physical" (*Almanac of the Dead* 686); and "For a long time Leah had not much enjoyed sex with the men she got" (*Almanac of the Dead* 361). Unlike Tayo's experience, sex fails to reconnect the characters in *Almanac of the Dead* with their ties to the land. Instead, their relationships to each other and to the land remain abstracted and separated.

In *Gardens in the Dunes*, Silko's characters Hattie and Edward base their marriage on platonic "companionship" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 177). Their, or more precisely Edward's, decision not to have sex mirrors the sterile and scientific environment that attracts Edward. His abstraction from the living earth also results in his removal from sex and his subsequent sexual repression. The fertility images found in Laura's garden in Italy result in "Edward's puffed-up concern about the male organ" which causes Indigo "to laugh out loud" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 304). The embarrassing fumbling in bed that occurs when Edward and Hattie attempt sex contrasts sharply with the enjoyment that Sister Salt, Maytha, and Vedna experience with multiple men "in the tall grass along the river" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 220). For the Mojave twins and for Sister Salt, sex reconnects them with their female generative powers. Sister Salt realizes that "a little Sand Lizard baby was coming to keep her company" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 222) as a result of her sexual activities. Sex also reaffirms the continuance and connectedness of all life for the American Indian characters in *Gardens in the Dunes*.

Despite the scarcity of the generative force in *Almanac of the Dead* that pervades *Gardens in the Dunes*, some of the characters have heard tribal stories, and this seems to enable them to incorporate aspects of tribal wisdom in their lives. Although most of Silko's characters in *Almanac of the Dead* fail to recognize any link to the land, some characters still recognize and utilize the authorities' blindness to the lack of boundaries found in the land¹³⁵. Sterling learned about the stories

¹³⁵ A potential problem with Silko's writing emerges when one examines her narratives. *Almanac of the Dead*, her most contemporary piece, centers around a culture reliant on drugs, weapons, corruption, and death and any connection with the land and with tribal stories seems to

despite his education at a boarding school; many of the characters recognize that "The people had been free to go traveling north and south for a thousand years, traveling as they pleased" (*Almanac of the Dead* 133); Lecha recognizes that the "white man had always been trying to 'control' the border when no such thing existed to control except in the white man's mind" (*Almanac of the Dead* 592); the Hopi, while imprisoned "had discovered the work he must do for the rest of his life; he must work tirelessly until all prisoners went free, and all the walls came down" (*Almanac of the Dead* 618); and Calabazas "lecture[s] on desert trails and secret border-crossing routes" (*Almanac of the Dead* 201) because he realizes that his success at smuggling things past imagined boundaries and barriers relies on his knowledge of nature and "the differences in the terrain that gave the desert traveler critical information" (*Almanac of the Dead* 202). These characters recognize, despite their restricted knowledge of tribal stories and the land, that boundaries and barriers are not impenetrable and have used this knowledge for their own personal gain. Near the end of *Almanac of the Dead*, Silko provides her readers with an image of a "vast concrete wall" that "appeared to crack and shatter in slow motion" (727). Silko's eco-warriors have caused a dam to collapse. The Barefoot Hopi describes the ramifications that the destruction of a spatial barrier, the dam, has on the people. He claims that "We are no longer solitary beings alone and cut off. Now we are one with the earth, our mother; we are at one with the river" (*Almanac of the Dead* 733). Silko restores the unity between earth and its inhabitants through the destruction of a physical boundary. Silko provides her readers with a message of hope by the end of the novel through Sterling. Sterling returns to the reservation and reconnects himself "with the earth" (*Almanac of the Dead* 757) and he "tried to remember more of the stories the old people used to tell" (*Almanac of the Dead* 759). Despite the threat of revolution and the prevailing death motif found throughout the narrative, Sterling re-establishes his connections to his tribe and to the land through stories.

As in *Almanac of the Dead*, Momaday's story *House Made of Dawn* incorporates very few female regenerative images. Abel's relationship to his mother, like Tayo's, ended early, and Set's mother in *The Ancient Child* also fails to appear as a significant character: all three mothers are dead by the beginning of the stories. Momaday's male characters suffer from their lack of connection to their mothers and therefore to their tribes and the land for "Failure to know one's mother is failure to know one's significance, one's reality, one's relationship to earth and society. It is being lost" ¹³⁶. Their severed ties to their mothers, tribes, and the land results in their vulnerability to witchery. Their premature severance from their mothers, and therefore the land, plays a part in their struggles to

empower the ancestors of the characters. The characters rarely apply that knowledge in the present. Likewise, *Gardens in the Dunes* and *Ceremony* are historical narratives that strongly reflect the healing and generative powers of tribal stories and remain closely linked with the land. One critic defends Silko through his claims that "*Ceremony*, is in no sense a nostalgic celebration of the 'old ways,' though some of its characters are governed by such feelings. Like many first-rate novels, it questions not only the modern world but the old ways themselves in such a manner that her Pueblo heritage becomes a highly dramatic aspect of the book as a whole" (Truesdale 205). Although her novels advocate change and innovation within the ceremonies themselves, a problem does emerge in that *Almanac of the Dead* takes place in more present times while *Ceremony* and *Gardens in the Dunes* are both historical narratives; however, I would argue that *Storyteller* resolves, or at least addresses, the issue by linking traditional tribal stories with contemporary times.

¹³⁶ Judith A. Antell, "Momaday, Welch, and Silko: Expressing the Feminine Principle through Male Alienation," *American Indian Quarterly* 12.3 (1988): 215.

integrate into their tribal contexts. Gradually, through various methods, these three men learn the stories that re-establish their links to the tribe, question the reality of spatial boundaries, and thus restore their unity with the land. Robert Nelson claims that, like Tayo, "Abel's disease arises out of his separation from the land" ("Snake and Eagle" 5). However, unlike *Ceremony*, Abel spends very little time on the reservation and a significant part of the narrative occurs in the city. The only "limited emotional bonds" (Antell 218) that he forms are with white women¹³⁷. Unlike Tayo, Abel never connects with a woman and therefore he only just "seems to be acquiring Francisco's ability to reconcile the parts of himself, and to reconcile himself with his world"¹³⁸ by the end of the novel. His reintegration to his tribal context is just the beginning of his healing process and yet, just as the end of the novel is the beginning of the narrative, his reconnection with the land is simultaneously a beginning and an end.

Gardens in the Dunes however, seems to heal the ills resulting from the broken relationship between humans and the land, which are found in *Almanac of the Dead* and other Native American stories. Just as *Almanac of the Dead* expands on the story of the destroyers found in *Ceremony*, *Gardens in the Dunes* expands on the "feminine life force of the universe" (Antell 219) found in *Ceremony* through Silko's character Ts'eh. Silko, in *Gardens of the Dunes*, builds on the precept that "the lives of Indian women represent continuity" (Antell 214). Due to the dominant images of women and earth throughout the narrative, the story resists spatial barriers by mostly excluding them from the narrative. The main illustrations of spatial barriers occur at the "Sherman Institute" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 70), which is an Indian school where "little ones might be educated away from their blankets" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 69). The Sherman Institute represents a spatially configured institution that attempts to inculcate American Indian children into "[w]estern cultural traditions" (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3) through education. Here Indigo encounters "door latches at the school, and now here—press down, lift up, twist left, twist right" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 105), which she again encounters on the monkey Linnaeus' cage. Door latches function as barriers that, temporarily at least, keep outside and inside separate; however, Indigo quickly learns how to unlatch the latches and to pass through the boundaries¹³⁹.

The story opens with an American Indian family consisting of only female Sand Lizards living on their traditional land. Immediately Silko presents images of Indigo's relationship with the land:

The rain she swallowed tasted like the wind. She ran, leaped in the air, and rolled on the warm sand over and over, it was so wonderful. She took handfuls of sand and poured them over her

¹³⁷ Many critics have examined Abel's relationships with Angela St. John and Milly. For a fuller discussion please refer specifically to Judith A. Antell's article "Momaday, Welch, and Silko: Expressing the Feminine Principle through Male Alienation."

¹³⁸ Lynn Domina, "Liturgies, Rituals, Ceremonies: The Conjunction of Roman Catholic and Native American Religious Traditions in N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*," *Paintbrush: A Journal of Contemporary Multicultural Literature* 21 (1994): 24.

¹³⁹ Clothing presents another constraint for Indigo. She felt that "Clothing suffocated her skin; naked in the moon's light, she felt alert and invigorated. Grandma Fleet was right: too much clothing wasn't healthy" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 85). Clothing, to Indigo, represents another restraint imposed upon her by the invaders.

legs and over her stomach and shoulders—the raindrops were cold now and the warmth of the sand felt delicious. (*Gardens in the Dunes* 15)

Indigo plays and revels in her connection with the land; how unlike the conspicuous absence of land in *Almanac of the Dead*. Indigo also learns to speak with and to understand her surroundings. She hears “The Earth” as it “announced her labor...Indigo felt the Earth’s breathing through the soles of her feet; the sound gently carried her along, so she did not tire dancing” (*Gardens in the Dunes* 32). Her connection with the earth sustains her and provides her with strength. Her Grandma Fleet discusses people’s unity with the earth to Indigo and Sister Salt. She discusses the process of death “as she hugged Indigo close to her side. ‘Don’t worry. Some hungry animal will eat what’s left of you and off you’ll go again, alive as ever, now part of the creature who ate you’” (*Gardens in the Dunes* 53). The earth and its inhabitants exist in a connected and interdependent relationship to each other. Grandma Fleet not only explains it to Indigo, she also fulfills her prophecy. Grandma Fleet dies in a “dugout shelter by the apricot seedlings” (*Gardens in the Dunes* 54). Through her death, she nourishes the apricot seedlings and ensures their survival; however, towards the end of the novel rather than the nourishing image of continuance that the apricot seedlings offer, Silko depicts ruin and destruction. When Indigo and Sister Salt return to the old gardens, they find that “Strangers had come to the old gardens...they slaughtered the big old rattlesnake who lived there; then they chopped down the small apricot trees above Grandma Fleet’s grave (*Gardens in the Dunes* 478). The “Strangers” (*Gardens in the Dunes* 478) are literally the invaders and colonizers of Native America who have disrupted, through their institutions and abstract beliefs, the cyclical continuation of tribal life and the relationship between human-to-land. This disruption appears temporary, however, for the final image of the narrative is that of the spring at the gardens where “Old Snake’s beautiful daughter [had] moved back home” (*Gardens in the Dunes* 479). The image of continuance dominates the novel to the end.

Silko’s newest novel depicts motherhood as healing and nurturing, in contrast to motherhood as seen in *Almanac of the Dead*. Mirroring Nola’s baby in *Mean Spirit*, Sister Salt’s baby signifies continuation and healing. Sister Salt and her baby dwell in unity. After Sister Salt and Indigo’s separation, indicative of their abstraction from their tribal context at the hands of the European settlers, “Sister Salt dwelled in the numb half world only a step outside the everyday world” (*Gardens in the Dunes* 204) because “part of herself was torn loose” (*Gardens in the Dunes* 204). Silko depicts the damaging effects that this separation causes through Sister Salt’s pain. As she gradually forms bonds with the twins, Vedna and Maytha, she begins to recover, but she realizes that she must be reunited with Indigo: her connection to her tribal context. The baby reconnects Sister Salt to her tribe and heals the separation that she suffered through connection. Like Hogan’s character Nola, Sister Salt communicates with her baby:

At first she had difficulty understanding the language her baby spoke to her from the womb, but then she recognized the Sand Lizard words pronounced in baby talk. She had not heard the Sand Lizard language spoken for a long time, except in dreams. (*Gardens in the Dunes* 335).

Again, language reinforces ties to her tribe and to healing. Her baby reconnects her to her tribal context and, through her baby, she ensures the continuation of the Sand Lizard tribe. Momaday’s depiction of Angela St. John, a white woman in *House Made of Dawn*, sharply contrasts with this

image of connection and regeneration. She views her baby as a “monstrous fetal form, the blue, blind, great-headed thing growing within and feeding upon her” (*House Made of Dawn* 34). Although the baby is physically attached to her, she perceives it more as a parasite: abstract and separate. If Native American women symbolically represent connection with the land, Angela’s non-nourishing relationship with her child symbolically represents non-Native’s severance with the land.

Hattie, a character of European descent in *Gardens in the Dunes*, also contributes to the “feminine principle” (Antell 213) in the novel. The subject of Hattie’s postgraduate studies serves a unique function in Silko’s project to destabilize spatial barriers. Similar to Horse’s Gospel in *Mean Spirit*, Hattie’s dissertation questions canonical boundaries. Silko uses Hattie’s research and the Ghost Dance gathering to question the Bible as a bound text. In *Gardens in the Dunes*, Jesus still walks the earth, therefore, the Bible is not a bound and dead text, but rather a part of an ongoing and living narrative. Various tribes and some Mormons gather for the Ghost dance, which “He [Jesus] told them...[to] dance” and “The Paiute woman had seen Jesus surrounded by hundreds of Paiutes and Shoshones” (*Gardens in the Dunes* 25). Silko, by “absorbing and restructuring the stories of Christianity” (Arnold 104), questions the boundaries that contain the Bible: the story continues. Through Hattie’s research, Silko further destabilizes any belief that the Bible might exist as a bound text by reinforcing the feminine generative imagery in the Bible. Hattie’s dissertation focuses on “assertions that Jesus had women disciples and Mary Magdalene wrote a Gospel suppressed [*sic*] by the church” (*Gardens in the Dunes* 79). Like Horse, Hattie writes past canonical boundaries. She reconfigures the creation story to include female, rather than male, generative powers. Her story begins with “Sophia, Zoe,” and Zoe’s “daughter who is called Eve” (*Gardens in the Dunes* 102). In this manner, she also reappropriates the Bible as a source of strength for women by revealing previously ignored sources.

In *Gardens in the Dunes*, Silko further questions the values and beliefs that shape “[w]estern cultural traditions” (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3) and practices through Edward. After the death of Grandma Fleet, Indigo’s and Sister Salt’s separation from their mother, and their subsequent separation from each other, Indigo escapes from the Sherman Institute. She finds refuge with Hattie and Edward. Hattie’s husband, Edward, signifies the negative effects of the worldview perpetuated by the invaders of Native America. He acts in contrast to the “continuity” depicted through the woman, and instead he “represent[s] change and clear separation from the past” (Antell 214): abstraction. Edward, a botanist, collaborates with his “colonial cronies” to “collect and import seeds and plant cuttings, cultivate and hybridize them to augment their beauty and improve yields” (Arnold 102). His participation in colonial activities influences his perspective of, and hinders his ability to understand, Indigo. When Edward initially learns of Indigo, through Hattie, his initial reaction is to *bind* her with “rope [which] had been only a precaution—for the child’s own good, so that she did not escape and flee into the desert” (*Gardens in the Dunes* 108). His desire to restrain her parallels the colonizers’ efforts to contain American Indians on reservations. Edward also remains preoccupied with what the law requires in respect to Indigo’s situation. He insists on following procedure and on “alert[ing] the boarding school superintendent” (*Gardens in the Dunes* 107) about Indigo’s presence. Earlier the cook had informed Hattie that “to notify the school” is “the law”

(*Gardens in the Dunes* 76)¹⁴⁰. Edward's attitudes and actions are representative of the invaders' beliefs, which eventually led to the cultural invasion of Native America and shaped legislation concerning American Indians.

Edward's predilection to visit 'other' places in order to collect specimens, 'other' living specimens that he keeps suspended and contained in glass bottles, distorts his view of Indigo. Hattie's description of his work illustrates his preoccupation with acquiring rare objects:

Edward traveled to places so remote and collected plants so rare, so subtle, few white men ever saw them before. He added these rare treasures to his growing collection of roots, stalks, leaves, and, most important, when possible, seeds. His ambition was to *discover* a new plant species that would bear his name, and he spent twenty years of his life in this pursuit before their marriage [emphasis added]. (*Gardens in the Dunes* 80)

The quotation above clearly illustrates his belief that living organisms exist as objects for collection. Edward's function as a collector links him to the collectors in *Almanac of the Dead* "who bought films of abortions and surgeries [and] preferred blood and mess" (102). These collectors, like Edward, collect living things. He also subscribes to the belief in discovery, an attitude that fueled the occupation of Native America. Discovery, as a theory or belief, relies on the supposition that the object discovered is "new" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 80) and therefore nameless, allowing the discoverer to name (or appropriate) the object. His work as a scientist and his worldview, founded on a scientific method of knowing, influences his view of Indigo. He attempts to 'know her' through "a volume of linguistic surveys of various desert Indian tribes" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 110), and by looking "at the photographs of the Indians of various tribes in the book" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 110). His enthrallment with collecting and discovery inform his fascination with Indigo:

Edward continued to search through his library for ethnological reports on the desert Indians. He was intrigued with the notion that the child might be the *last remnant* of a tribe now extinct, perhaps a tribe *never before studied* by anthropologists [emphasis added]. (*Gardens in the Dunes* 113).

Again, he is guilty of assigning a living being's worth as an object of study or based on its rarity. His view of Indigo as a collectable object contrasts with Hattie's understanding that American Indians "were human beings" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 108). Silko uses Edward to "[examine] systems of thought that underlie Western patriarchal culture's oppression of women, indigenous peoples, animals, and earth" (Arnold 103). She attributes to Edward the characteristics exhibited by the invaders of Native America.

Edward's views of the earth and nature also reflect a predilection to perceive the earth as "dead Other" (Allen, "The Psychological Landscape of *Ceremony*" 7). Hattie admits that, "to

¹⁴⁰ In *Almanac of the Dead*, Silko's character Sterling discusses 'the law' also in terms of children in boarding schools. He "has been interested in the law since he was a kid in Indian boarding school. Because everything the white teachers had said and done to the Indian children had been 'required by law'" (*Almanac of the Dead* 26). Edward's defense that the rope was for Indigo's good and his dogged determination to follow the law mirror the attitudes, which Sterling reveals, of the school authorities. The condescension and legalistic dogmatic adherence to law and the written word that Silko addresses in her narratives reflects the values and beliefs that influenced the worldview held by the colonizers/invaders of Native America, which subsequently led to the bound existence (on reservations) of the American Indians.

Edward, the garden was a research laboratory" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 75). He categorizes, an exercise that stems from a western worldview, and classifies the contents of the garden as objects of study. Silko reaffirms his connection to "Western patriarchal [culture]" (Arnold 103) when he objects to the handling of the statues in Laura's garden. Laura decided, "The day she stepped out into the sunshine from a museum in Crakow...[that] the figures of stone and terra-cotta must have fresh air and sunshine, not burial in a museum" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 296). Edward objects because he believes she will ruin them by using them. He feels that "this was what happened when irreplaceable scientific data fell into the wrong hands" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 296). Edward's attitude reflects a predilection to abstract objects from their utilitarian purpose and to place them on display behind glass boxes to preserve "irreplaceable scientific data" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 296). Laura's attitude more closely reflects the Sand Lizard belief that "they never found a plant they couldn't use for some purpose" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 86). Sand Lizards consume and incorporate plants, actions that reflect their connection to all things, while the dominant social group, represented by Edward, abstracts and separates specimens. At the end of the novel, Indigo's collection of seeds bears fruit—metaphorically and literally. Maytha exclaims, "'You can eat them!'...Those gladiolus weren't only beautiful; they were tasty" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 478). Through her contrast of Edward's and Indigo's differing perceptions of the earth, Silko clearly questions the values and beliefs that inform the worldview which has led to the cultural invasion of Native America.

Despite the contrast illustrated between Edward's worldview and the women characters' worldviews, as Ellen Arnold suggests, "*Gardens in the Dunes* refuses to break down into oppositions between tribal and Euroamerican, traditions and technologies" (103). Throughout her journeys, Indigo observes different types of gardens. At Edward's and Hattie's house in California, she "could see the fan shape of the gardens—in orderly squares and rectangles, outlined by low walls of stone bright with the moon's light" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 85), and yet in a different part of the garden was "the old orchid house...then abandoned to a white wisteria. Over the years, the wisteria followed the contours of the glass panels of the vaulted roof" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 74). The unstructured part of the garden, which once abandoned returned to a more natural and unruly state that contrasts to the earlier squares and rectangles. In New England, Edward's sister has a "passion for English landscape gardens" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 163). This perhaps is indicative of the colonial links between England and America rather than just Susan's affair with her Scottish gardener. In Laura's European gardens and in Hattie's Aunt Bronwyn's British gardens, Hattie and Indigo see statues of "toads" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 243), "a marble head of Medusa" with "baby snakes that covered her head" and a "serene, not furious" countenance (*Gardens in the Dunes* 291), and "a bird-masked woman holding a bird-masked baby in her arms" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 300). Through these statues and other fertility symbols found in the gardens, they learn about European links with "the primordial Mother" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 243). The gardens serve to connect Indigo with Hattie, Laura, and Aunt Bronwyn through "alliances" formed "among themselves and with the other living creatures and plants of the earth" (Arnold 103). Indigo's ability to transfer the knowledge that she gains from Laura and Bronwyn about "the corms," "seeds," and "the pollination process for hybrids" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 305) collapses further barriers between Europe and Native America. She incorporates

European ancient wisdom into her tribal context, which allows her to later feed Sister Salt, the baby, the twins, her animals, and herself while the other Indians' crops suffered.

Hattie also benefits from her relationships to Indigo, Laura, and Aunt Bronwyn. She builds upon her intuitive knowledge and her questioning of the permeability of spatial barriers through her connection to other women and her introduction to "the old stories and spirits of Europe" (Arnold 104). She also reaches the conclusion that, after the annulment of her marriage and Edward's death, her place is not with Indigo but in Europe. She decides to "return to England or Italy—she dreamed about the gardens often" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 394). Rather than attempting to incorporate American Indian traditions, Hattie discovers her own heritage. In *Gardens in the Dunes*, Silko emphasizes the rich cultural tradition and close ties to the earth that Europeans have forgotten. She offers an alternative to "the romanticization and cultural appropriation of indigenous peoples that so many contemporary Native Americans resent" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* 156). Hattie contributes to Silko's "subversive" project to "[break] down barriers between Euroamerican and Native cultures" (Arnold 104). Unlike the European characters found in *Almanac of the Dead*, Hattie, Laura, and Aunt Bronwyn re-establish their vital and life-giving connection with mother earth. This links them with some of Hogan's characters, namely the Billys and Father Dunne who also regain their connection with the land.

Animals and Ancestors: Teachers and Guides of Tribal Wisdom

Momaday's and Silko's writings, like their contemporaries' works, often allude to animals and ancestors as guides and teachers for their characters, and their relationships with each other act as extensions of their relationship with the land. Through ancestors and animals, Silko and Momaday link their characters to tribal frameworks that resist spatial construction. The characters' stories and tribal stories converge¹⁴¹ in the authors' narratives largely through their connection with animals and ancestors. The two authors both illustrate tribal knowledge of animals, the intimate links between humans and animals, and communication with animals. They use ancestors to depict their belief that death fails to act as a barrier. Through dreams and visions the ancestors visit the characters of the stories and impart tribal wisdom. Through the animals and ancestors, Silko and Momaday repudiate Yellow Woman's claim, in Silko's "Yellow Woman", that "What they tell in stories was real only then, back in time immemorial" (56). Instead, readers learn that "it is the same / even now"

¹⁴¹ Mary Slowik analyzes the union between, what she sees as, the two narrative forms in Silko's *Ceremony*. Her examination remains problematic because she labels the mythical tribal tales as "primitive" and as separate from the "realist stories" (106). However, she makes the valid point that Silko brings the two formats together towards the end of the narrative. Despite her claim that "the narrative modes overlap, playing off each other and then eventually shaping each other" (106), she fails to acknowledge Silko's main theme in *Ceremony* that the stories exist as one. Mary Slowik, "Henry James, Meet Spider Woman: A Study of Narrative Form in Leslie Silko's *Ceremony*," *North Dakota Quarterly* 57.2 (1989): 104-20.

("Storytelling" 94). The stories related by Silko and Momaday are part of "time immemorial" when "animals could talk to human beings and many magical things still happened" (Silko, *Ceremony* 94-5), and readers begin to understand how Calabazas speaks of the past in present tense, as seen later in the chapter, and how "the oldtimers could only speak of yesterday and tomorrow in terms of the present moment" (Silko, *Ceremony* 192). The stories, the magic, the connection with animals, the ancestors all exist as part of the present moment. By re-stitching their narratives to a tribal framework through animals and ancestors, Silko and Momaday write beyond the barriers erected by linear time.

Often the characters receive help or wisdom from animals. In *Ceremony*, Tayo encounters a mountain lion on his quest to free Josiah's cattle. The mountain lion represents the "good spirit of Winter"¹⁴² as well as "the hunter's helper" (*Ceremony* 196). The mountain lion shows Tayo the direction he needs to travel in order to reach the cattle. He also saves Tayo from the two cowboys that catch him near the damaged fence. The macaws in *Almanac of the Dead* speak to the American Indian twin Tacho. They instructed him concerning the revolution, but "did not always speak clearly to him" (*Almanac of the Dead* 475). Again animals instruct and guide American Indians who communicate with them. In *Gardens in the Dunes*, Indigo and Sister Salt realize that the snake's presence at the water "was a good sign; if soldiers or others were lurking in the area, the big snake disappeared" (38). Their knowledge of the snake's habits enables them to ascertain their situation. Indigo also forms relationships with a parrot, Rainbow, and a monkey, Linnaeus, on her travels with Hattie and Edward. After she frees both from "the bars of the cage" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 107), they act as her companions and reinforce her continued connection to the earth and its creatures. They too have suffered removal from their contexts and containment at the hands of Euroamericans. Indigo listens to the monkey's advice "not...to begin the journey yet; it was too hot and she would die along the way....Hadn't they taught her any better than that" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 110-11)? The monkey's reminder of her Grandma Fleet's teachings links her to her tribe and to the land. Hattie comments on her astonishment that "Indigo believed the parrot understood everything she said" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 278). Indigo views languages and communication differently from Hattie. Her Grandma Fleet taught her to decipher the language of coyotes and at the Ghost Dance she learns that "there was only one language spoken—the language of love" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 34). Hattie remains bound by her constricting view of languages and communication while Indigo benefits from her ability to communicate with animals.

Indigo also maintains this connection with the earth despite her physical separation from her family and the dunes. She gains knowledge of the earth that sustains her throughout her journey, unlike the characters in *Almanac of the Dead* who fail to retain the stories. As in Linda Hogan's stories, she also learns the languages of other creatures. She not only hears the earth speak, but learns the language of coyotes:

The listened as the coyotes began their hunt, using yips and barks to signal one another and to drive any small game, rabbits and roosting birds, into their ambush. She [Grandma Fleet] taught the girls to distinguish the coyotes' language of barks and howls so

¹⁴² Elizabeth N. Evasdaughter, "Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*: Healing Ethnic Hatred by Mixed-Breed Laughter," *MELUS* 1.1 (1988): 87.

they would know when the coyotes got lucky. (*Gardens in the Dunes* 47)

The Sand Lizard tribe benefits from tribal knowledge of the earth and through their knowledge of 'other' languages. Their knowledge of coyote language sustains and feeds them. They recognize language as a dynamic and evolving. At the old gardens, "Grandma Fleet sang in the old Sand Lizard language, but the girls understood some of the words and got the meaning of the song from Grandma's voice" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 50). Gloria Bird's discussion of language in "Towards a Decolonization of the Mind and Text 1: Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*" reveals the differences between a non-Native's view of language and Silko's. Bird speaks of the passage when Ku'oosh, like Grandma Fleet, uses an older dialect to explain the fragility of the world to Tayo:

This passage, perhaps more than any other written in a Native American novel, expresses differing value systems regarding language and the responsibility required in its use. Not even the single word stands alone, as Silko has said '[W]ords are always with other words, and the other words are almost always in a story of some sort.' Implicit in a word's meaning is a view of the world in which language exists less as simply a vehicle for communication but more as a bridge linking human-to-story. ("Towards a Decolonization of the Mind and Text 1" 4)

The dialects spoken by Ku'oosh and by Grandma Fleet remain comprehensible to the girls and to Tayo despite the evolution of the languages. The old Sand Lizard language evolved into the Sand Lizard language that the girls know, and each word in the present Sand Lizard language remains linked to words in the old Sand Lizard language. Just as "The earth is not...ever dead" but "is being, as we are, as all that spring from the land is being: aware, palpable, and alive" (Allen, "The Psychological Landscape of *Ceremony*" 7), language is also alive. Language becomes plural through animals' languages and the Sand Lizard language evolves without losing its connections to its past: both aspects of the Sand Lizard language serve to reinforce Indigo's connection to the land and to the tribe.

Silko also uses one particular animal in *Almanac of the Dead* to exhibit the negative effects of containment. A mare lives on Serlo's ranch in South America. Her confined upbringing and subsequent bliss at her newfound freedom lead to her death. Speaking of the mare:

The open space and unfenced distances of plains to all horizons affected the mare strangely, and the grooms speculated the mare had been born and reared in box stalls...Once out of the box stalls and away from the confines of paddocks and fences and buildings, the mare had become increasingly excited. (*Almanac of the Dead* 545)

Her delight in the open spaces now available to her lead to her addiction to open spaces and her desire to test the boundaries of that space. She runs and runs but nothing ever stops her. For the mare, "Distances fell away, and the earth was a blur; the little mare had wanted to race beyond all barriers and restraints" (*Almanac of the Dead* 557). In nature, unlike in the paddock, barriers do not exist and she dies of exhaustion in her attempts to find the barriers that constrain her. The mare exhibits the negative effects caused by a blind faith in barriers and boundaries but, through her efforts, she also confirms that the land remains boundless.

Other animals in Silko's narratives also chafe against the containment that results from ownership and confinement. In *Gardens in the Dunes*, Indigo learns about "small black Chinese pigs"

(181) owned by Mr. Abbott. The pigs, like the mare, continually test the boundaries that define their confinement:

They seemed to listen with defiant pride as he recounted their naughty habit of breaking out of the pen. The ingenuity of the pigs amazed Mr. Abbott; they pushed and pressed their bodies against the fencing material—stone, planks, or wire, it didn't matter to them—until they located the point of most weakness. Then day after day they took turns, rubbing and scratching themselves against the same point in the fence until the last wire or the wood or the stones gave way. (*Gardens in the Dunes* 181)

Like the land, the pigs resist and ignore spatial barriers. Their focus centers on breaking down the barriers that contain them. Their links to the land, because “the earth is being, as all creatures are also being: aware, palpable, intelligent, alive”¹⁴³ reveals itself through their mutual disregard for spatial barriers.

Josiah's Mexican Cattle, in *Ceremony*, exhibit the same characteristics seen in the pigs. His “cattle were descendants of generations of desert cattle, born in dry sand and scrubby mesquite, where they hunted water the way desert antelope did” (74). Josiah notes that the cattle's knowledge of the land stems from generations of ancient wisdom as well as their intimate contact with, and knowledge of, their environs. He qualifies the nature of their knowledge by linking them to other living creatures. He claims that “Cattle are like any living thing. If you *separate* them from the land for too long, keep them in barns and corrals, they lose something [emphasis added]” (74). Their knowledge stems from their contact with the land and remains learned rather than inherited. Silko's depiction of the cattle explains her belief that American Indians' separation from their tribal frameworks remains responsible for their loss of tribal wisdom and their connection with animals and the land. The cattle also “had little regard for fences” (79). Again, Silko uses animals and their connection to the land to break down spatially constructed barriers.

In *The Ancient Child*, Momaday's character Set is bear. He represents the inseparable connection shared by humans and animals. His ties with bear also link him to tribal stories. Momaday relates a story about a boy who turned into a bear¹⁴⁴:

Suddenly the boy was struck dumb; he trembled and began to run upon his hands and feet. His fingers became claws, and his body was covered with fur. Directly there was a bear where the boy had been. (*The Ancient Child* 1)

Set turns into the bear throughout the course of the novel. He must learn, through his relationship with a Native American woman named Grey, to incorporate and accept the bear. Before he learns the tribal stories and his place in the ritual, “The bear was taking hold of him. Loosing its power upon him, and he did not know what it was” (*The Ancient Child* 229). Grey, through tribal stories and rituals, teaches him to integrate the bear into his being. He must learn that he is “Set, you are the bear;

¹⁴³ Paula Gunn Allen, “The Feminine Landscape in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*,” *Critical Perspectives on Native American Fiction*, ed. Richard F. Fleck Pueblo, CO: Passaggiata P, 1997) 234.

¹⁴⁴ In *Ceremony*, Silko also incorporates a bear-boy into the ceremony. Betonie uses “Shush. That means bear” (*Ceremony* 128) to help in the hoop ceremony. Tayo, through his ceremony, learns that he must accept the land and all living beings as part of himself. Shush represents the connection between human, animal, and land.

you will be the bear, no matter what" (*The Ancient Child* 271). The use of the tribal and mythic character, the bear-boy, serves Silko and Momaday's purpose to "[destabilize] a variety of...boundaries" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* 14). They function as reminders and representations of the links between humans and animals. Momaday's "narrative draws to a close with an image of Set[']s...transformation. Set is now Tsoai-talee [bear]" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* 82). Set, as bear, becomes part of the tribal framework through his link to animal and to story.

Ancestors also serve as teachers and guides for Momaday's and Silko's characters. They resist death as a barrier and often visit their descendents to impart tribal wisdom. In Momaday's autobiography *The Names: A Memoir*, Momaday wrote that "Some of my mother's memories have become my own. This is the real burden of the blood; this is immortality" (22). Ancestral relationships surpass linear time and serve to pass knowledge from one person to another. Momaday and his characters benefit from their relationships with their ancestors. Grey, in *The Ancient Child*, continues to converse with her grandmother despite her grandmother's death. At the cemetery Grey tells her grandmother that "Yes...I hear you" (*The Ancient Child* 116) and later when Grey spoke or sang it "was not Grey's voice they heard, but the grandmother's" (*The Ancient Child* 176). Momaday contests the boundaries between death and life and between one person and another through Grey/Grandmother. Grey also dreams. The episodes between her and Billy the Kid blur the barriers between reality and fiction. In a getaway with Billy, "she set Dog running" (*The Ancient Child* 172). Her horse Dog, exists in both her dream life with Billy and in her story with Set. She links "her reason for being" with dreaming, because "she dreamed it" (*The Ancient Child* 173). The distinction between dreams and reality break down through Grey. Her grandmother visits in dreams and "instructed her. In her dreams the earth, eagles, fishes, coyotes, tortoises, mice, and spiders instructed her" (*The Ancient Child* 173). Through her grandmother and other living beings, Grey learns tribal wisdom and stories that prepare her for her part in Set's transformation as well as for her own transformation.

In *Almanac of the Dead*, characters mostly reject or abuse their familial relationships and therefore their relationships with their ancestors. Menardo prides himself that, although he "could have been like the others—like his cousins who stayed up all night listening to old men talk about devils and ghosts" (*Almanac of the Dead* 483), he instead 'improves' himself and rejects the tribal stories. His rejection of his tribal framework results in his inability to understand his dreams, a tool he could have learned through his ancestors and relatives. His "fatal flaw is his inability to translate messages"¹⁴⁵, which subsequently leads to his death. The breakdown of tribal connections also leads to violations of kinship ties. Lecha and Zeta "had talked in low voices...about Uncle Federico's 'big finger'" (*Almanac of the Dead* 119). Silko depicts the various violations and the consequences of the lost tribal ancestor and kinship ties in her novel *Almanac of the Dead*. Again, *Gardens in the Dunes* seems to heal the problems found in *Almanac of the Dead*. Indigo and Sister Salt both experience dreams that connect them with their ancestors and that comfort them despite their separation from their relatives, from each other, and from their home. On Indigo's journey, "Grandma Fleet came to

¹⁴⁵ Deborah Horvitz, "Freud, Marx and Chiapas in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 10.3 (Fall 1998): 59.

her and she loved Indigo as much as ever; death didn't change love" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 178); in one dream "Mama was rocking her" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 470), which serves to reconnect her with her mother, despite her mother's death; and in Sister Salt's dream "Indigo was smiling and singing...so Sister Salt knew she was all right" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 203). Unlike the characters in *Almanac of the Dead*, Indigo and Sister Salt remain connected to their ancestors and to their tribal framework through dreams.

Silko and Momaday both use animals and ancestors to write beyond literal and figurative barriers. The animals, due to their connection with the earth, resist fences and confinement. Grey, in *The Ancient Child*, claims "I am as trim and graceful as a doe, and I am free of the strictures of 'civilization,' so-called" (17-8). She links her freedom from boundaries to her doe-like characteristics. Momaday and Silko both use animals to further destabilize boundaries. The characters also refuse to view death as a barrier. This attitude allows them to converse with their ancestors and to gain tribal knowledge through dreams. The authors also use animals and ancestors to contest the boundaries between reality, fiction, and tribal tales.

Maps as Masks and Symbolic Walls: Obscuring Nature through Artificial Barriers

Silko and Momaday both address maps in their narratives as symbolic walls that confine and abstract nature. Maps are constructed and configured in conjunction with the construction of boundaries. Their existence depends upon spatially conceived perceptions of the earth as territory. Maps create (artificial) 'space' through the production of man-made boundaries. Theorists view these boundaries as indisputable 'reality'. Louis Owens claims that Vizenor advocates the argument "that what is considered the real world 'is an invention whose inventor is unaware of his act of invention...the invention then becomes the basis of his world view and actions'"¹⁴⁶. The dominant social group of the United States, as a product of western European thinking, has invented a 'real' world predicated on spatially constructed boundaries and barriers.

One scene in *House Made of Dawn* particularly stands out as symbolic of Momaday's attack on spatial boundaries. After Abel kills the Albino, he reminisces about his time in jail. In particular, he discusses his cell walls:

The walls of his cell were white, or perhaps they were gray or green; he could not remember. After a while he could not imagine anything beyond the walls except the yard outside, the lavatory and the dining hall—or even the walls, really. They were abstractions beyond the reach of his understanding, not in themselves confinement but symbols of confinement. The essential character of the walls consisted not in their substance,

¹⁴⁶ Louis Owens, *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* (London: U of Oklahoma P, 1992) 4.

but in their appearance, the bare one-dimensional surface that was white, perhaps, or gray, or green. (*House Made of Dawn* 104-05).

Abel's description of prison, the embodiment of confinement created by spatially configured barriers and indicative of reservations, conflates walls (spatial barriers) with abstraction. He recognizes that the United States and its institutions are founded on a worldview that perpetuates abstraction. The barefoot Hopi realizes this as does Gerry Nanapush, one of Louise Erdrich's characters discussed later. The importance of the wall is not the material wall itself but what it represents. Walls and other artificial barriers contrast with Momaday's description of Abel's valley:

But the great feature of the valley was its size. It was almost too great for the eye to hold, strangely beautiful and full of distance. Such vastness makes for illusion, a kind of illusion that comprehends reality, and where it exists there is always wonder and exhilaration. (*House Made of Dawn* 17)

Abel, "Bound and helpless, [like] his eagle" (*House Made of Dawn* 22), must reconnect with the boundless vast earth. Nature, through its vastness, collapses spatial barriers. Not long after, Momaday depicts a "wire fence" that "was overgrown with blue and violet morning-glories" (*House Made of Dawn* 27). He offers his readers an image of nature overgrowing and obscuring a spatial boundary. Tayo, in *Ceremony*, also encounters a wire fence. As part of his healing ritual, Tayo must "cut into the wire" of the fence "as if cutting away at the lie inside himself" (*Ceremony* 191). Through his actions, Tayo destroys a wall/fence. Fences delimit the boundaries of a property or territory. By "cutting down...Floyd Lee's barbed wire fence"¹⁴⁷, he frees himself and reclaims the land from its imprisonment as property or territory. Momaday, according to Catherine Rainwater's book *Dreams of Fiery Stars*, was "the first Native American writer...to devise semiotic strategies for such representations of conflicting spatio-temporal paradigms" and he "established a model and precedent for the innovative fiction that would follow...over the next decades" (110-11). His successors have adopted and expanded on his project to contest spatial boundaries and barriers through ties to the land, and they continue to contest his symbolic walls through their stories.

Silko and Momaday, like Hogan, depict houses and tribal structures differently than conventional constructions of a house. Momaday's title, *House Made of Dawn* suggests that the earth houses us rather than a structure made of walls. His house is made of dawn. Francisco's house in *House Made of Dawn* "enclosed him [Abel]...as if the small dark interior, in which this voice and other voices rose and remained forever at the walls" (195-96). The walls absorb and are part of the past and the future: "all the infinity that he had ever known" (*House Made of Dawn* 196). The town in *House Made of Dawn* has "steep earthen walls" (72). Momaday, in both of the instances above, attributes walls with living qualities and as continuations of the earth or traditions. In *Gardens in the Dunes*, Grandma Fleet's house in the gardens remains part of the land, not separate. The door has no latch and "The old *dugout* house was not easy to spot because its roof was low to the ground and partially covered with sand [emphasis added]" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 38) and "Inside the air was cool and smelled of clean sand" (*Gardens in the Dunes* 38). Silko consciously contrasts the Sand Lizard house with the European and Euroamerican houses that Indigo encounters. Inside Hattie's house in

¹⁴⁷ Michael Hobbs, "Living In-Between: Tayo as Radical Reader in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*," *Western American Literature* 28.4 (1994): 308.

New England the “air inside the house was not unpleasant or stale, but absorbed a subtle odor” and unlike the Sand Lizard house, Indigo focuses on “the walls [which] were paneled in dark wood” (*Gardens in the Dunes* 158). Rather than existing as separate from the landscape and the earth, Native American houses exist as extensions of the land in Silko’s, and Momaday’s narratives. Sister Salt, through her description of “the Lord’s house” (*Gardens in the Dunes* 438), redefines the term house when she “told them ‘a house’ means a circle of stones, because spirits don’t need solid walls or roofs” (*Gardens in the Dunes* 438). The Lord, the creator of all things, his house (the land) requires no walls. Through their depiction of houses and walls, Silko and Momaday question a spatially configured construct: the wall. Through the links that their narratives have with nature through tribal frameworks, they reveal the artificial characteristics of spatial barriers and boundaries.

Momaday’s story *The Ancient Child* addresses boundaries and outlines. In *Dreams of Fiery Stars*, Catherine Rainwater quotes Momaday’s opinions concerning these issues:

As Momaday says, ‘I don’t want to enclose the thing I’m drawing in a precise outline. Giving a thing such definition sometimes reduces it.’ Momaday seems to follow the same general rule in his fiction; he resists ‘precise outline’ and reductive ‘definition’ by developing a rich language or images that points to the semiotic processes involved in the formation of...community. (79).

He not only uses language to avoid outlines and boundaries but also address the issue through his character Set in *The Ancient Child*. Set, an American Indian man who was orphaned at a young age, has a career as a painter. At art school, his instructor advised him on painting techniques. His art instructor specifically mentions boundaries and space as he instructs Set:

You have to be always aware of the boundaries of the plane, and you have to make use of them; they define your limits, and they enable you to determine scale, proportion, juxtaposition, depth, design, symmetry correctly. You see, you can make something, a line, a form, an image. But you have to proceed from what is already there—defined space, a plane. You can make something out of something, but you cannot make something out of nothing. (55)

To the art instructor, the boundaries determine what is painted: what exists. Without boundaries, nothing exists for the instructor. He espouses the premise behind the justification of colonization.

Until the invaders of Native America arrived and began to map out states and delineate boundaries, nothing—in their view—existed. The invaders *discovered* uncharted land and claimed it. The instructor’s advice equates the blank canvas with delimited boundaries and with territory:

This understanding of territory is made explicit in the form of property...‘Territoriality appears as a general, neutral, and essential means by which a place is made, or a space cleared and maintained, for things to exist. Societies make this place-clearing function explicit...A parcel of land, for example is considered empty before it has buildings on it—it is valuable only for the possible things...that may occur upon it. (Piper 486)

Out of the ‘space’ created by imaginary lines and then cleared, emerged the United States of America: an artificial construction built upon arbitrary boundaries often determined through war. Set initially learns, at art school, that art is limited by boundaries. His painting remains linked to the construction of lines and outlines. However, through his gradual transformation and acceptance into a tribal

context, he learns to see past the boundaries and his painting begin to change. They now reflect, to “others...confusion and chaos” (*The Ancient Child* 216) due to their “whirling depths” (*The Ancient Child* 213) rather than lines. He sees in his new paintings, unlike the aforementioned others, “elements of the story” (*The Ancient Child* 216). Lee Schweningen believes that “nature and the story are one” (58). As story, Set’s paintings are nature and reflect nature’s characteristics. They no longer contain barriers and lines. Set “has gone beyond the boundaries and is attempting to make something from nothing” (Scenters-Zapico 510). After his transformation and his integration into a tribal framework, through his healing ritual, he gives up the boundaries and lines—the territory of the canvas—and becomes “a renowned maker of shields” where he incorporates “the most powerful medicines of all, bear claws and eagle wings...and the likeness of stars” (*The Ancient Child* 315). His new craft resists boundaries and instead relies upon nature for inspiration.

Silko’s stories also address the issue of mapping. In *Ceremony*, she specifically addresses the function of maps as labeling devices. Through the landscape in *Ceremony*, she “represents Euro-American space...as written or superimposed over Indian lands, and she regards Native American cultures as ‘buried under English words’” (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* 112). Maps have written over the contours of the land with words and lines. Rainwater, in her article “The Semiotics of Dwelling in Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony*”, also states that “federal space subsumes Native American” (222) land. Silko resists the mapping of the land through Tayo’s journey. Karen Piper describes the specifics of his journey:

Tayo breaks open the boundaries of abstract territoriality and subjectivity through...his wanderings. He crosses the borders of reservation (Laguna), national forest (Mt. Taylor), and municipality (Gallup). Each area is coded for different uses by the U.S. government...Tayo, however, is following a different pattern, the pattern of his people...His walk, therefore, strips governmental designations and embraces the patterns and land perceptions of the old people. (494)

His ritual journey and healing ceremony depend on his restored relationship with the land. At one with the land, his actions mirror the characteristics and contours of the land. The earth contains no boundaries, and therefore he recognizes no artificial boundaries on his journey.

The characters in *Almanac of the Dead* and *Gardens in the Dunes* also disregard governmental and country boundaries. Indigo, like Tayo, travels from her ancestral lands to town nearby, to California, to New England, and to Europe. Through her travels, she crosses and trivializes cultural, social, imagined, and physical boundaries. On her voyage across the Ocean she recognizes that “Ocean was Earth’s sister” (*Gardens in the Dunes* 226). She recognizes the unity between earth and water. Despite the fact that the “ocean lay between them [her family]” (*Gardens in the Dunes* 226), she fails to view the Ocean as a barrier. Distance fails to hinder communication with her sister. She asks the ocean to “Send your rainy wind to my sister with this message: I took the long way home” (*Gardens in the Dunes* 226). Geographical separation across many perceived boundaries exists merely as another route home for Indigo. In *Almanac of the Dead*, Calabazas speaks about the earth, the people’s connection to the earth, and the subsequent lack of boundaries:

‘We don’t believe in boundaries. Borders. Nothing like that. We are here thousands of years before the first whites. We are here before maps or quit claims. We know where we belong on this

earth. We have always moved freely. North-south. East-west. We pay no attention to what isn't real. Imaginary lines. Imaginary minutes and hours. Written law. We recognize none of that. And we carry great many things back and forth. We don't see any border.' (216)

His dialogue serves to substantiate Silko's contesting of spatial barriers through a rejection of maps and through an intimate connection with the land. He also speaks in the present tense despite his subject matter when he claims "We are here" (*Almanac of the Dead* 216). He refuses to recognize time as a barrier in his speech. Many critics discuss the break down of linear time depicted by American Indian authors through the structure of their narratives. One critic discusses Silva's, one of Silko's characters in "Yellow Woman", disregard for boundaries as a product of his delusions that he lives in the past. Silva, "Rather than honoring modern land boundaries and modern ownership laws, he pretends that he is living in a time when there were no legal land boundaries and when Indian hunters were free to kill any animals they found" (Beidler, ed. 71). She attributes his neglect in observing boundaries to nostalgia for the past; however, in many American Indian stories the "figural design breaks down the very notion of past, present and future" (Bell 49). Silva *lives* when "land boundaries" (Bell 49) and maps still do not hinder the freedom of American Indians because their tribal connection with the land problematizes spatially configured barriers and boundaries.

Momaday and Silko both perceive maps as masks and symbolic walls that attempt, but fail, to bind and constrain the land. Through their characters' actions and journeys, Momaday and Silko refuse to acknowledge boundaries that have never existed. Rainwater's article "The Semiotics of Dwelling in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*" discusses "United States space" as "defined by a series of gas stations, motels, and road signs urging the traveler to move over the land rather than settle into it" (222), and in *Dreams of Fiery Stars* Rainwater calls that space "artificial" (113). Momaday and Silko use their characters and their narratives to resist mapping. They erase the outlines and boundaries erected after the invasion of Native America.

Where Boundaries Cease to Exist: Silko and Momaday's Union of Form and Function through Inter- and Intratextuality

Silko's and Momaday's books further reflect the authors' rejection of spatialized boundaries through the union of form and function. Both authors employ literary techniques that, like Linda Hogan and other American Indian authors, question and destabilize the belief that books exist as spatially bound objects. Catherine Rainwater, in her book *Dreams of Fiery Stars*, states that "as various critics have explained..., Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* is not merely *about* a ceremony—it *is* a ceremony. The story is not merely *about* a healing—it is meant to *be* a healing" (157)¹⁴⁸. This assertion disrupts any beliefs that Silko's narrative exists merely as a book, and it makes the claim that defining her story merely as a bound object fails to take into account the complexity and wider

¹⁴⁸ Silko's narrative relies heavily on Laguna oral stories and has therefore drawn the criticism of Paula Gunn Allen who "complains that Leslie Silko had ethically violated the legendary privacy of the Lagunas by including sacred clan stories in her novel *Ceremony*" (St. Clair 83).

tradition on which the narrative relies. In short, *Ceremony* breaks through its covers due to its ties to, and because it is, American Indian ceremony and myth. She also unsettles the conventions that define literature. The critic, David Hailey, Jr. reveals the visual images found in *Ceremony*. His analysis of her poetic narratives illustrates "The 'invisible' characters in *Ceremony*" which "range from maidens...to...male kachinas...to animal helpers...to totems of goodwill usually presented as corn"¹⁴⁹. She incorporates pictures into her narrative as well as words. Through the structural format of their narratives, Momaday and Silko continue their project to collapse spatially constructed boundaries.

Ceremony, and arguably a large majority of narratives authored by American Indians, illustrates that "Myth and ritual, idea and act, are inseparable; ceremonial ritual enacts mythology and legend as if for the first time" (Bell 47) because the stories exist as part of "time immemorial" (*Ceremony* 95), and as Tayo's grandmother states, "It seems like I already heard these stories before...only thing is, the names sound different" (*Ceremony* 260). The authors re-stitch their stories to a tribal framework through myth and tradition. In keeping with her tribe's oral traditions, Silko also "displaces individualist notions of authorship" (Piper 484) in both *Ceremony* and *Storyteller*. In *Ceremony*, she achieves this "by attributing the *Ceremony* tale to Thought-Woman, the mythic creator of the universe, while presenting herself as a mere transcriber of the tale" (Piper 484), and in *Storyteller* she "disown[s] the authority of writing and authorship"¹⁵⁰ by "credit[ing] the 'they say' of common oral tradition"¹⁵¹ and by attributing some of the tales to her Aunt Susie, whose "text is from tribal memory" (Danielson 23). Despite the book-like physical appearances of her narratives, her written work, as well as Momaday's, fails to conform to traditional book formats through their resistance to authorship and through myth. Again, the authors illustrate that book covers only superficially exist as spatially constructed barriers.

Silko's and Momaday's narratives also disrupt the imagined barriers that book covers present through shared themes, stories and narratives, characters, and as part of tribal myths and stories. In *Storyteller*, Silko includes a story about "Yellow Woman." As Edith Swan's article "Laguna Symbolic Geography and Silko's *Ceremony*" points out, "Yellow Woman is the generic name for all female Kachinas" (242). Silko's character Ts'eh in *Ceremony* "signifies Yellow Woman, the heroine of many a tale at Laguna and Acoma" (Swan, "Laguna Prototypes of Manhood" 56). Both Ts'eh and Al's wife in "Yellow Woman" illustrate that Yellow Woman exists, not only in myth or in an historic moment, but she still exists. In Silko's version of Yellow Woman, in "Yellow Woman", "not only are boundaries crossed by the woman, but the boundaries between 'life' and 'story,' between 'fact' and 'fiction,' are often eliminated" (Beidler, ed. 75). Ts'eh, as Yellow Woman aids Tayo throughout his ceremony and reconnects him to the land. Al's wife begins the narrative believing that she cannot be Yellow Woman "Because she is from out of time past and I live now" ("Yellow Woman" 56), but

¹⁴⁹ David E. Hailey Jr., "The Visual Elegance of Ts'its'tsi'nako and Other Invisible Characters in *Ceremony*," *The Wicazo-Sa Review* 6.2 (1990): 4.

¹⁵⁰ Toby C. S. Langen, "Storyteller as Hopi Basket," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 5.1 (Spring 1993): 9.

¹⁵¹ Linda L. Danielson, "The Storytellers in *Storyteller*," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 1.2 (1989): 22.

when she returns to Al she “was sorry that old Grandpa wasn’t alive to hear my story because it was Yellow Woman stories he liked to tell best” (“Yellow Woman” 62). She realizes that Yellow Woman continues to exist within her and that her story continues to have resonance. By simultaneously making the story collective, the woman remains linked to tribal myth through her connection to Yellow Woman and therefore to all the women who have previously been Yellow Woman, and personal, through her separate and distinct life with Al, Silko manipulates her stories to reflect her project of breaking down spatially configured social and physical barriers.

Silko’s inclusion of Yellow Woman in both *Storyteller* and *Ceremony* creates intertextual links between the two narratives that also contest the perceived spatial barriers provided by book covers. She also utilizes intratextual links in the two books by consciously choosing not to “use ordinary chapter breaks” (Truesdale 206) in either book. Each story remains part of another larger story, which in turn alludes to stories in her other books. As Rainwater asserts in *Dreams of Fiery Stars*, in *Ceremony* “Both lyrical and narrative passages cross-code material originating in an atemporal, mythico-spiritual realm” (14). Silko not only links the prose passages with the poetic passages through theme and subject, but she also unsettles the apparent functions carried out by the two different narrative styles in *Ceremony*. Initially, the poetry passages serve to incorporate mythical stories into the narrative while the prose passages seem to narrate a separate contemporary story line. Suddenly, on pages fifty-seven to fifty-nine she destabilizes the boundaries between the two narrative forms. Emo relates a story about sleeping with white women during the war, but Silko writes the tale as she has previously written the mythic stories: in poem form. The stories become intertwined and inseparable. Silko re-stitches Tayo’s and Emo’s stories into the tribal framework. The linear structure of stories disintegrates because, just as “[W]ords are always with other words” (Bird, “Toward a Decolonization of the Mind and Text I” 4), stories never exist in isolation. Silko problematizes the conventions that configure stories as bound and separate.

Through another intertextual link, Silko connects her book with Momaday’s narratives. In *Ceremony*, she relates a story about a boy’s transformation into a bear. Momaday includes this story in several of his narratives including *The Names: A Memoir* and as the central story in *The Ancient Child*. His stories not only share the same material, but his narratives also intertextually relate to Silko’s story *Ceremony*. Like Silko, he also contests the boundaries between fiction and life through the intertextual links between *The Names* and *The Ancient Child*. In *The Names* he reveals that his name is “Tsoai-talee” (preface). In *The Ancient Child*, readers learn that Tsoai-talee is the bear, who Momaday states in his character descriptions before the beginning of the novel is “the mythic embodiment of wilderness.” Set/Momaday embodies wilderness: dissolving the boundaries on three levels. Set, the main character of the novel, also “knew Tsoai in himself” (*The Ancient Child* 315). Momaday begins *The Ancient Child* with the disclaimer that the characters are all fictional, and yet by incorporating a mythical bear, whose name Momaday shares, he unsettles the barriers that categorize life and fiction. Rainwater’s book *Dreams of Fiery Stars* also reveals that, like Set, Momaday engages in drawing. Readers learn in the aforementioned book that Momaday himself identifies strongly with the Kiowa ‘bear boy’ (83). Again, like Silko, Momaday also question the boundaries that seemingly separate myth from contemporary life. Momaday’s readers learn that Koi-ehm-toya, the woman who saw the eight children, the seven sisters and the boy-bear, leave camp is Set’s great-

great-grandmother. Momaday transforms the mythic and tribal story into a family story. As Set begins his transformation into bear, "He began to run. *'The Boy ran'*" (*The Ancient Child* 291). Again, myth and life begin to merge. Set is mythic bear and yet he is Set. He claims that the story contains pictures as well as words.

Momaday and Silko, as American Indian authors, offer their readers new and innovative ways to perceive reality. Through their narratives, they destabilize a plethora of the spatially constructed boundaries. They link their stories to the land, animals, ancestors, dreams, death, paintings, and myth in order to re-stitch them into a tribal framework. Through the reliance of their narratives on tribal stories and their reworking of those stories, "Linear time—beginning, middle, end—dissolves into a cycle of recapitulation and repetition" (Bell 49) and spatial barriers disintegrate. Like the stories written by their contemporaries, their narratives disrupt the dominant social group's norms and incorporate the reader into their healing ceremonies by collapsing spatial boundaries.

Chapter 3: Learning Survival through James Welch's Tribal Connections

A Spectrum of Learning: Tribal Connections Rather than 'Individual Definition[s]' in James Welch's Novels

The four novels written by James Welch, in many ways resemble the novels of his contemporaries. Like N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, each of his four stories focuses on a male protagonist of Native American descent. Also like his contemporaries, "One of the most prominent themes" in his books "is that of alienation and re-orientation...that is, an individual once removed from his tribal base by war, the lure of the city, or other causes, must suffer extreme alienation...If he...somehow survives this dislocation...he must go through the process of gradual reaffirmation of tribal values" (Fleck 3). However, despite the resemblance of his stories to a more conventional western narrative due to his incorporation of central male protagonists, he offers readers something unique. Although readers attempt to encode the narratives using western literary techniques by analyzing the narratives *individually* and focusing on the protagonists' *individual* struggles, his narratives resist western conventional analysis through various intertextual links and connections. Welch's narratives emulate tribal relations through their connections and their opposition to scrutiny as bound and isolated narratives. An awareness of connective themes in Welch's novels allows readers to perceive the narratives as one continuous story: a story of Blackfeet history. Welch offers, through the continuum of his stories, characters and events that present a spectrum of learning. *Winter in the Blood*, *The Death of Jim Loney*¹⁵², *Fools Crow*¹⁵³, and *The Indian Lawyer*¹⁵⁴, through their connections, merge to contest boundaries between books and to teach about tribal connections rather than "individual definition[s]"¹⁵⁵, with stories at the heart of the healing.

Just as Silko's book *Almanac of the Dead* expands on her prophesy concerning witchery and her book *Gardens in the Dunes* acts as a continuation of the female regenerative spirit found in *Ceremony*, although Welch wrote *Winter in the Blood* and *The Death of Jim Loney* before *Fools*

¹⁵² James Welch, *The Death of Jim Loney* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979).

¹⁵³ James Welch, *Fools Crow* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986).

¹⁵⁴ James Welch, *The Indian Lawyer* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990).

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Ernest Stromberg, "The Only Real Indian is a Dead Indian: The Desire for Authenticity in James Welch's *The Death of Jim Loney*," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 10.4 (Winter 1998): 35.

Crow, the historical *Fools Crow* contains a prophesy about the future/present upon which Welch's other books expand. It charts the maturation of a young Blackfoot male named White Man's Dog, later Fools Crow, in the late nineteenth century, his acceptance of responsibility within a tribal framework, and his integration into that framework. Louis Owens observes that this narrative "relies heavily upon documented Blackfoot history, merging actual events and characters with the author's creations" (156)¹⁵⁶. By questioning the barrier between fiction and reality, Welch creates a new historically based tribal story that prophesizes the events that occur in his other novels. Welch sets *Fools Crow* at the cusp of great changes in Native America; the 'Napikwans,' or white people are just beginning to encroach in "a world defined securely according to Blackfoot values and Blackfoot discourse" (Owens 157). *Fools Crow* foreshadows the eventual loss of Native American land, values, traditions, and framework with the coming of the Napikwan.

The Pikuni tribe's members in *Fools Crow*, although separated into many smaller bands of which Fools Crow's band of Lone Eaters is merely one, remain connected through ceremonies, stories, cross-band societies, and traditions. The Pikuni tribes' relations and negotiations with the United States' government and its delegates, the soldiers, plays a peripheral yet crucial role in *Fools Crow*. At one point in the novel, a representative of the United States' government, General Sully, 'requests' a meeting with the Pikuni chiefs. Once various tribal delegates have met with the seizers' (soldiers) and heard their ultimatum and threats, they return to their various bands to discuss the problems. Welch depicts the interconnectedness of the tribe's various bands and between the members themselves through the ensuing discussions. Through the tribe's methods of problem solving, he illustrates the inter-tribal relations. The tribes contain "societies [that] encompassed all the bands," but because of the cross-band nature of the societies "The Raven Carriers had only one member in the camp" (312). The various societies' members play a crucial role in decision processes. The interwoven nature of the bands emphasizes the connectedness of the Blackfeet and their tribal framework.

Ernest Stromberg observes that "Critic William Bevis...extends the implication of Welch's intentions: 'These novels are important...because they suggest...a tribal rather than an individual definition of being'" (35). The young members of the tribe especially benefit from a tribal rather than an individual based framework. Through other tribal members, they learn various skills and observe tribal social relations:

Yellow Kidney sat at the back of the lodge and watched his sons, One Spot and Good Young Man, harden arrow shafts over the fire. They had peeled the sarvisberry sticks and trimmed and scraped them smooth with stones....They had learned much the past summer from Fools Crow...He had taught them to select the

¹⁵⁶ Louis Owens, in his book *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*, reveals historical links found in *Fools Crow*. For example, Owl Child and his gang represent a real Blackfoot "group that actually murdered the prominent former trader and successful rancher Malcolm Clark" (160), "The massacre of Heavy Runner's band is an event that actually took place on January 23, 1870, when the halfblood Joe Kipp, scouting for a large military command out to avenge the murders of Clark and other whites, mistook the friendly chief's village for that of the more hostile Mountain Chief" (160), and finally, "Curlew Woman's account [of the massacre] matches an Indian account of the actual attack" (161). Welch writes beyond historical and fictional barriers by writing a story where actual historical Native American people live alongside fictional characters.

right woods for their bows and arrows. He had given each of them a horse, good strong horses, and they had learned to ride well. (*Fools Crow* 229)

Through their kinship and tribal ties, they learn the skills necessary for them to fulfill their roles within the tribe. One Spot and Good Young Man acquire the knowledge necessary for warriors through their links to other tribal members. The notion of the 'individual' does not exist in the Blackfeet world, but is later introduced through the Napikwan. Tribal members remain connected to each other through their traditions, activities, social relations, and stories. The Pikuni tribal society also provides the forum for young members to learn about the tribe's histories. Welch depicts *Fools Crow* as a man who knows and understands tribal stories. As a child "he had taken to following an old storyteller around—Victory Robe White Man" (218). Tribal members saw him following the storyteller so often that they named him White Man's Dog. Also as a youth, "he had sat and listened to the old man's stories. *Many* children did [emphasis added]" (95). Stories function within the tribe to teach children about the tribe's history and to unify the tribe through that shared history. In *Fools Crow*, stories are well circulated and well known by everyone and serve to bind tribal members together through a common history.

The ominous threat of the Napikwans' encroachment remains constantly present in *Fools Crow*. While *Fools Crow* remains fully immersed in Blackfoot tradition and his "development is connected to this rich tradition throughout the novel"¹⁵⁷, the author also depicts the effects that the arrival of the Napikwans have on the tribe. Through his character Fast Horse, Welch foreshadows the future events that lead to the weakening of the Blackfoot tribal framework and that dominate his other three narratives. Fast Horse, a young warrior close in age to *Fools Crow*, "has turned away from his own people" (*Fools Crow* 157), and "There was nothing in camp for him anymore, nothing about the life the Lone Eaters lived that appealed to him. The thought of hunting, of accumulating robes, of the constant search for meat seemed pointless to him" (193). Fast Horse chooses to separate himself from his tribal context and to join a band of renegade Pikuni bent on killing the Napikwan. He turns his back on the way the "Pikunis live. We help each other, we depend on each other, we fight and die beside each other. There is not room for the man who despises his fellows" (187). While Fast Horse despises the presence of Euroamericans in Native America, he simultaneously embraces their way of life and disdains tribal life. He is lured by "easier ways of gaining wealth" (193). Ironically the very threat that Fast Horse fights against and arguably the impetus behind the appropriation of Native America, capitalism—introduced to American Indians through the colonization of Native America—corrupts Fast Horse and removes him from his tribal framework. Welch illustrates the damage caused to the tribe through Fast Horse: only *one* of its members. Three Bears and Rides-at-the-door realize that the consequences of Fast Horse's banishment, whether tribal or self-imposed, would "go hard on everyone" (82). The tribe's configuration as an interconnected whole results in its resistance to

¹⁵⁷ Nora Barry, "A Myth to Be Alive: James Welch's *Fools Crow*," *MELUS* 17.1 (1991-92): 13.

distinguishing one member from the rest, and therefore one member's actions reflect on and affect the whole tribe¹⁵⁸. Fast Horse's severed relationship with the tribe portends future developments.

Fast Horse once held an esteemed place within the tribe due to his father's possession of the Beaver Medicine bundle. Fools Crow, on the other hand, held the position in the tribe as a "poor relative" (*Fools Crow* 7) and a "near-woman" (6). However, in a reversal of their roles, as Fools Crow immerses himself more fully into tribal myth his life begins to parallel "culture hero myths" (Barry, "A Myth to Be Alive" 3). Conversely, Fast Horse loses his esteemed position within the tribe as he removes himself from his tribal framework. He had once "dreamed of war honors and strong medicine, an exalted place among the Pikunis. But that was not to be. Now he was a *solitary* figure in the *isolation* of a vast land [emphasis added]" (*Fools Crow* 330). The attraction of wealth and glory through war lured him away, along with his participation in Yellow Kidney's capture¹⁵⁹, and serves to separate him from tribal life. Fools Crow comes to understand and recognize the attraction offered by the individualistic existence promoted by the Napikwans. As he journeys in order to persuade Fast Horse to rejoin the Lone Eaters, he realizes that "He had not been without another

¹⁵⁸ James Welch illustrates this principle by incorporating examples into a couple of his narratives: again linking his stories through common theme and a tribal framework. On a journey to inform the other Pikuni bands of Heavy Shield Woman's vow to accept the role of Sacred Vow Woman during the Sun Dance and to acquire gossip for his mother—another method of communication and connection between the bands—Fools Crow visits the band known as The Black Patched Moccasins. He narrates the band's role within the larger Pikuni framework:

At one time, only three winters ago, they had been the most powerful of the bands. Their lodges were always full of meat and robes, and the men and women were cheerful and generous. Their leader, Little Dog, was head chief of all the Pikunis. He was a trusting man and chose to befriend the Napikwans... They, in turn, treated him well, for they considered him a valuable go-between who was able to control the more hostile of the Pikunis. (93-4)

Little Dog's position among the Pikunis and the Napikwan reflects on his entire band: his prosperity directly relates to the prosperity of his band. However, the esteemed position of the Black Patched Moccasins has changed within the Pikuni tribe. Now "their hearts had turned cold" (94) due to Little Dog's actions and his ensuing death. His decision to ally himself and the Pikuni tribe with the Napikwan results in his death because "The killers of Little Dog felt the head chief had put the interests of the Napikwans before those of the Pikunis. It was he who betrayed the people" (97). As a direct consequence of the betrayal, the once prosperous band as a whole lives in poverty and "were distrustful" (94). Little Dog's fate directly correlates to the fate of his band. In *Winter in the Blood*, Welch uses ducks as an analogy to further depict the interconnectedness of social relations within the tribe. The narrator and his mother discuss the fate of the ducklings won at the fair and then placed in a bathtub, which served as an artificial pond. All of the ducks, barring Amos, drowned. The narrator perceives Amos' escape from death as indicative of his superior intellect. Teresa, the narrator's mother, discounts his supposition that Amos had "been smarter than the others" (15). She claims that "He was lucky. One duck can't be smarter than another. They're like Indians" (15). By linking ducks and Native Americans together through common characteristics, Welch reaffirms the connections between tribal members and nature—discussed later in the chapter. He also uses the analogy of ducks to demonstrate again that the actions and fate of one American Indian affects the entire tribe.

¹⁵⁹ Yellow Kidney, an older warrior within the Lone Eater's band, leads young men, including Fools Crow and Fast Horse, on a horse raiding expedition. Fast Horse foolishly boasts of his accomplishments in the middle of the enemy's village during the raid. His actions culminate in Yellow Kidney's capture and eventual mutilation. Fast Horse's dishonorable conduct eventually results in his banishment and his self-imposed isolation from the tribe.

person for some time" and "He had never felt so free" (211). He realizes why Fast Horse and Owl Child, the leader of the renegade band that Fast Horse joins, are drawn to this way of life:

The thought came into his mind without warning, the sudden understanding of what Fast Horse found so attractive in running with Owl Child. It was this freedom from responsibility, from accountability to the group, that was so alluring. As long as one thought of himself as part of the group, he would be responsible to and for that group. If one cut the ties, he had the freedom to roam, to think only of himself and not worry about the consequences of his actions. So it was for Owl and Fast Horse to roam. And so it was for the Pikunis to suffer. (211)

Although Fool Crow recognizes the attractions offered by a solitary existence, he also realizes the dangers. In separating himself from the tribe, and tribal stories, Fast Horse damages the tribe. His suffering, due to his isolation, also affects the tribe. Welch's remaining three stories expand upon Fast Horse's isolation and the subsequent damage done to tribes. In *Fools Crow*, he illustrates the introduction of this problem through contact with Napikwans, in his other stories he depicts the exponential increase of the problem in contemporary society.

Unlike *Fools Crow*, Welch sets his remaining three stories in the late twentieth century. Although the narratives depict separation from tribe, symbolized through Fast Horse, rather than tribal connections, illustrated through Fools Crow, and seem to revolve around individual Native American men and their individual stories, *Fools Crow* provides a link that binds them together. The "Above Ones" (*Fools Crow* 367) show Fools Crow a vision of the future. He consequently "grieve[s] for our children and their children, who will not know the life their people once lived" (359), but the mythic character Feather Woman reassures him that "they will know the way it was. The stories will be handed down, and they will see that their people were proud" (359-60). Both Fools Crow and Feather Woman recognize the crucial role that stories have in preserving the Blackfoot values and way of life for the future. The stories related in *Fools Crow* provide the links between *Winter in the Blood*, *The Death of Jim Loney*, and *The Indian Lawyer*. These three narratives act out the prophecy of the future that Fools Crow witnesses through Feather Woman's designs. Welch, in his other three books, examines the extent to which tribal stories affect a spectrum of contemporary Native American characters.

Winter in the Blood, *The Death of Jim Loney*, and *The Indian Lawyer* explore whether Fools Crow, symbolic of the Blackfoot tribal past, has successfully moved "the community into the future [while] keeping the traditional values alive"¹⁶⁰. Welch's four narratives, as continuations of tribal stories, demonstrate the continuance of Native American values and beliefs while exploring the effects that cultural invasion has had on Native America. His characters illustrate the importance of both tribal stories and a continued connection to a tribal framework. *The Death of Jim Loney* focuses on Jim Loney, a man of mixed Native American and Euroamerican heritage, and his life in Harlem, Montana. Welch traces Jim Loney's struggles to form lasting connections with any of the other characters, especially the women. He fails to bond with his girlfriend Rhea, his sister Kate, and with his old high school buddy Pretty Weasel. Significantly, he also fails to "understand the forces that

¹⁶⁰ Ron Gable, "Sovereignty in the Blood: Cultural Resistance in the Characters of James Welch," *The Wicazo-Sa Review* 9.2 (1993): 39.

have shaped his personal history" (Stromberg 37). He lacks knowledge and exposure to the tribal histories that prominently feature in *Fools Crow*. Without this knowledge and without the support of a tribal framework, he fails to integrate past events into his life. Loney "couldn't connect the different parts of his life, or the various people who had entered and left it" (*The Death of Jim Loney* 20). His memory of the past remains detached from tribal stories. This lack of a framework results in his inability to remember his past. After his father abandoned him and Kate moved away, he stayed with a woman whom he claims "he had tried hardest to love" (89), but "[h]e has no memory of her name, or who she was"¹⁶¹. His failure to integrate, or even to remember, his past results in the lack of a present and a future. His separation from his tribe and its history results in a superficial and meaningless existence.

Welch, in *The Death of Jim Loney*, creates a world that mirrors "an exhibition of modern cowboy art, mostly plastic art" (10): meaning arises artificially and through plastic representations of reality. The people in Loney's hometown of Harlem, define people based upon representations and caricatures of stereotypes largely determined by appearances. Ernest Stromberg claims that "Loney, marked by his appearance as Indian, is displaced from the community of whites" (43), and yet his only tie to his Native American community, his mother, abandoned him as a child. Throughout the novel, Loney attempts to decipher his links to his mother and her community. He "seeks desperately to understand the forces that have shaped his personal history" (Stromberg 37). However, he is never exposed to tribal social relations and learning methods, unlike the characters in *Fools Crow*. While he looks American Indian, "he never felt Indian...[but] 'he was considered an Indian'" (Stromberg 36). He never gains access to a tribal framework, and yet his social significance arises through his categorization as an Indian. Loney represents "plastic art" (*The Death of Jim Loney* 10) because the dominant social group's perception of Loney as a representation of a Native American remains founded on artificial and superficial signifiers. His exposure to reductive perceptions of American Indians limits him because its definitions and perceptions remain predicated on "a parochial view of reality, a static perception of the world" (Freire 159)¹⁶². He perpetuates and internalizes that definition

¹⁶¹ Nora Barry, "'The Lost Children' in James Welch's *The Death of Jim Loney*," *Western American Literature*, 25.1 (1990): 39.

¹⁶² Paul Eisenstein's article, "Finding Lost Generations: Recovering Omitted History in *Winter in the Blood*," specifically focuses on the importance of rewriting and rethinking the history of Native America. Paul Eisenstein, "Finding Lost Generations: Recovering Omitted History in *Winter in the Blood*," *MELUS* 19.3 (1994). He discusses the characteristics of the dominant social group's narrative, its historical narrative in particular, and he also illustrates the reasons behind the narrative:

The dominant culture's writing of history may record events...it may even extol a handful of minority individuals for their achievements, but its discourse cannot include the recounting of events that threaten the image of itself it must maintain. That image, the product of power relations that construct it, at every step determines what does and does not get told; stories of cruelty committed in its name are either concealed or rewritten for absorption into America's monocultural narrative. (5)

For the colonizers' history to function in conjunction with its self-constructed narrative, it must omit any stories or events that undermine that narrative. Eisenstein illuminates and affirms Paolo Freire's observations concerning the invaders (of Native America). For Loney, the gaps created by the dominant culture's historical narrative are never filled with a tribal narrative of history.

of his ethnicity. His life contrast sharply with Fools Crow's existence "in a world defined securely according to Blackfoot values and Blackfoot discourse" (Owens 157). The security Fools Crow experiences remains noticeably absent in *The Death of Jim Loney*:

When Loney thought of Indians, he thought of the reservation families, all living under one roof, the old ones passing down the wisdom of their years, of their family's years, of their tribe's years, and the young ones soaking up their history, their places in their history, with a wisdom that went beyond age. (*The Death of Jim Loney* 102)

Loney realizes that the absence of tribal stories and *histories* result in his inability to understand and incorporate his *history*. In contrast, Fools Crow's social significance remains contingent on his roles as hunter, provider, teacher, visionary, and healer within the collective tribe rather than on his appearance. His story remains tribally located rather than socially determined. Jim Loney exists in a world dominated by western cultural signifiers; therefore, he remains unable to attach significance to any area of his life because he has no ties to a reservation or to tribal stories, and yet he is American Indian.

Loney's all encompassing detachment ultimately results in his death. His death remains the subject of debate among literary critics. Jim Loney's inability to connect with Pretty Weasel and his later misinterpretation of Weasel as a bear cause Loney to kill Pretty Weasel. The accidental killing of his high school friend results in, what certain critics term, a ritual death. Loney arranges the circumstances surrounding his own death at the hands of a tribal policeman on the reservation when he confesses his part in Weasel's death to his father. Some critics ally themselves with John Purdy who argues that "one may also see in it [Loney's death] an affirmation of the traditional relationship between a landscape and a people" ("Bha'a and *The Death of Jim Loney*" 71). Purdy bases this claim on an interview with James Welch. He points out that "As Welch once told Bill Bevis: 'He [Loney] does orchestrate his own death....He creates it, he creates a lot of events to put himself on top of that ledge in the end...he knows how his death will occur. And to me, that is a creative act and I think all creative acts are basically positive'"¹⁶³. Paula Gunn Allen agrees with Welch. She claims that he "dies like a warrior, out of choice, not out of defeat. Though he could not plan or control his life, he could, finally, determine his death" (*The Sacred Hoop* 145). For Welch and Allen, Loney's actions demonstrate his ability to determine his own fate. Other critics, notably Louis Owens in *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*, contends that Loney's ritual death remains more complex. He agrees with Purdy and Welch that "In the end, Loney is able to assert control over his life only by adopting a warrior's stance, by selecting and controlling the time, place, and manner of his death" (154); however, he observes that a reading of Loney's death purely based on these terms fails to consider certain problems that stem from his death. Owens goes on to illustrate the difficulties that arise from Loney's decision to die:

But in dying as he does, Loney simply remains victimized by the authoritative discourse that defines the utterance 'Indian.' In believing that the 'real' Indian world is a thing of the dead past,

¹⁶³ John Purdy, "Bha'a and The Death of Jim Loney," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 5.2 (Summer 1993): 71.

Loney has adopted the Euroamerican idea of the Indian as a figure of the epic, and therefore absolute, past. (155)

Owens further argues that "Loney adopts the stance of the Indian as tragic hero, that inauthentic, gothic imposition of European American upon the Native American. Loney enacts the fate of the epic *Vanishing American*" (Owens 155). Loney's death, according to Owens, reconfirms certain stereotypical perceptions held by Euroamericans of Native Americans. Owens also seems to suggest that Loney himself internalizes the stereotypes, and his decision to die remains firmly embedded in a stereotypical perspective of who he, as a Native American, ought to be in order to attain authenticity.

Loney's detachment directly correlates to his insufficient exposure to tribal stories and social relations with other Native Americans that he requires in order to learn how to define himself through tribal connections rather than individually. Instead, he incorporates a non-tribal story: the only story he knows. I believe that textually, Loney himself admits that, to a large degree, his contrived death creates certain problems. Earlier in the novel, Loney finds his dead dog with a boy from the reservation near Harlem. As Loney journeys toward his death on the reservation where the boy lives, Loney leaves a message for the boy with a dog:

Loney turned to the dog. 'You tell Amos [the boy] that Jim Loney passed through town while he was dreaming. Don't tell him you saw me with a bottle and a gun. That wouldn't do. Give him dreams. Tell him you saw me carrying a dog and that I was taking that dog to a higher ground.' (*The Death of Jim Loney* 167)

Loney's insistence on the boy's ignorance of his "bottle and a gun" (167) seems to suggest a moment of self-awareness that his death "wouldn't do" (167). Loney himself realizes that his story might damage the child. Through his death, he fulfills Fools Crows' fears that the future Blackfeet "will not know the life their people once lived" (*Fools Crow* 359). Loney's separation from his mother and her tribal framework correlates to his unfamiliarity with Blackfoot history. Story and tribal wellbeing, indeed life, remain inseparable according to many American Indian authors; therefore, Loney's separation from Blackfeet stories results in death. He never learns survival through tribal connections.

The nameless narrator of *Winter in the Blood* experiences a similar detachment. He feels no connection to the land, to his relatives, or to his life in general. His life consists mostly of periods of work on his mother's land and periods of hopping from one bar to another. None of the women in his life "meant anything to me" (*Winter in the Blood* 2). Like many Native American male protagonists, he lacks the vital connection with a female. Not only does he remain distant from his mother and grandmother, but also from his girlfriend who spends the majority of the narrative avoiding him. Paul Eisenstein claims that, again like Loney, the narrator's detachment results from a skewed perception of history:

But more than that, Welch wants to imply the historical/ancestral cause of the narrator's malaise, that is to say, how this thirty-two-year-old man's inability to connect is, at least in part, determined by the void which characterizes his and other Native Americans's (and the dominant culture's) historical consciousness. ("Finding Lost Generations" 5)

Again, the schism between the invaders' narrative of Native America's history and tribal history causes the detachment and separation of the protagonist from a tribal framework. However, his circumstances differ from Loney's in one crucial aspect: he has access to tribal stories and a tribal

framework. Although he feels no particular attachment to his mother and grandmother, they have not abandoned him. In fact, "This woman who was Teresa's mother had told me many things, many stories from her early life" (*Winter in the Blood* 34). Not only does she tell him stories, but the stories of her past also illuminate family as well as tribal history. The narrator reveals that "The old lady had ended her story with the image of the people being driven 'like cows' to their reservation" (157). His grandmother offers him a tribal narrative and perspective of history. Unlike Loney, because the narrator of *Winter in the Blood* lives on reservation land and has access to family and therefore family stories, he ultimately establishes connections to his family and past. He is able to reject the alienation and instead he reintegrates himself into a tribal framework¹⁶⁴.

Welch portrays his initial detachment from a tribal framework through his lack of a name. Fools Crow has three names while, in *Winter in the Blood*, "The protagonist's namelessness is one way Welch shows his displacement because names carry much significance in Native American cultures"¹⁶⁵. In *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*, Louis Owens discusses the tribal significance of Fools Crow's three names:

The protagonist's three names—in contrast to the nameless narrator of *Winter*—illustrate the essential process of maturation and integration into community in the Blackfoot world. Each new identity is conferred upon the individual from the community and thus tells everyone—Fools Crow as well as his fellow Pikuni—precisely who he is. (161)

Naming within the tribe defines the person's links to, and position within the tribe. The grandmother of the narrator in *Winter in the Blood*, although she tells him her stories, never reveals to Teresa or to the narrator who is Teresa's father. The absence of this crucial link hinders the narrator's ability to forge a link to a tribe. As he drifts aimlessly through life, he gradually attains connection through an old Native American named Yellow Calf¹⁶⁶.

¹⁶⁴ Part of the narrator's previous alienation might result from the fact that he lives with his family on a Gros Ventre reservation but his grandmother is a member of the Blackfoot tribe, and he also initially believes that his grandfather was only part Native American. David Craig points out that "Welch, however, does not sentimentalize the Indian past. For example, when the narrator determines his ancestry, he also learns that his grandmother has been ostracized by the Gros Ventres because she was a Blackfoot, an outsider". David M. Craig, "Beyond Assimilation: James Welch and the Indian Dilemma," *North Dakota Quarterly* 53.2 (1985): 188. Welch problematizes his distance from his tribal framework by creating this added complication. However, the crucial link between the protagonist and his relatives, and thus his stories, remains present.

¹⁶⁵ Betty Tardieu, "Communion in James Welch's *Winter in the Blood*," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 5.4 (Winter 1993): 71.

¹⁶⁶ The name Yellow Calf appears in several of Welch's narratives. In *Winter in the Blood*, Yellow Calf plays a crucial part in the narrator's reintegration into a tribal framework. In *Fools Crow*, Yellow Kidney had the name Yellow Calf "picked out" for his grandson (244), and finally Sylvester Yellow Calf is the main protagonist of *The Indian Lawyer*. As discussed earlier, names play a significant role within the tribe and tribal stories. As Welch intentionally uses names in his narratives to emphasize the characteristics of his protagonists—Loney is a pun on lonely, Fools Crow's three names, and the narrator's namelessness in *Winter in the Blood*—the repeated appearance of the name Yellow Calf in his narratives must also be intentional. He also uses the name Amos more than once. Amos is a duck in *Winter in the Blood* and a boy in *The Death of Jim Loney*. Through names, Welch further links his narratives together. He provides further connections to destabilize the spatial boundaries provided by book covers. Instead, he offers a continuous narrative of tribal history.

The narrator initially has very little contact with Yellow Calf, a man who lives three miles from Teresa's farm. The long ago visit the narrator made with his father is initially the extent of his exposure to Yellow Calf. Throughout the course of the novel, the frequency of the narrator's visits to Yellow Calf increase. Towards the end of the novel, Yellow Calf reveals his connection to the narrator's grandmother. He too is a "member of that band of Blackfeet" (*Winter in the Blood* 157) and not a Gros Ventre. Yellow Calf completes the story that the narrator's grandmother always ended prematurely. He fills the gap between her arrival on the Gros Ventre reservation and Teresa's birth. Through Yellow Calf's story, the narrator finally makes the connection. He now possesses the ability to understand the previously elusive and fragmented tribal history. In addition, he grasps his part in the story. He recognizes that Doagie "*wasn't Teresa's father; it was you, Yellow Calf, the hunter*" (159). Unlike Loney, the narrator has family and ancestors, and their stories provide him with a tribal framework. Through these familial and tribal links, the narrator's detachment transforms into integration.

Sylvester Yellow Calf, the protagonist of *The Indian Lawyer*, represents another part of Welch's spectrum. He grew up on the reservation, and although his parents deserted him like Loney's parents, his grandparents brought him up and he attended a school on the reservation. Therefore, like the nameless narrator of *Winter in the Blood*, Sylvester (Sly) retains access to tribal stories. However, he has chosen to move away from the reservation—physically as well as mentally and spiritually—to pursue his career as a lawyer. Ron Gable explores the differences between Sly and Fools Crow:

Sylvester Yellow Calf is seemingly as distant from traditional native values as Fools Crow is the embodiment. Yellow Calf is an individual facing the world. He does not live near the reservation and he seems to be entirely assimilated. He knows European-American ways so well that he is a lawyer responsible for the rules. (40)

Although as a child he lived on the reservation and heard the stories, he *decided* to move away from home in order to achieve 'success.' He retains enough of the tribal stories and social relations to realize the ramifications of his choice.

Sly knows that "he was becoming distant from these old people and their ceremonies as well" (*The Indian Lawyer* 110). Away from the tribe, he becomes further assimilated into non-Native systems and institutions. As a lawyer, he also sits on a parole panel for the local prison. By accepting a position of authority within the legal and penal system, he perpetuates and unintentionally advocates the legal procedures upheld by the United States: the same legal system that has participated in the confinement of American Indians on reservations. In addition, he inadvertently supports confining, spatially, less desirable members of society. The prison acts as an artificial barrier to separate certain people from the rest of the population. His role as a member of the parole board, his assimilation into the dominant social group, provides the impetus behind Welch's story. The narrative pivots around Sly's attempt to gain a seat in Congress, which is thwarted when he receives blackmail from an inmate he refused to parole. Only when he accepts his grandmother's gift of "his great-great-grandfather's war medicine" bundle (167) and when he "tried to remember the stories his grandmother and other old people had told" (156) does he succeed in closing the distance between himself and the people he has left behind on the reservation and who "have fallen by the wayside" (58). At the end of the novel, Sylvester rejects the western narrative of success offered as a prominent lawyer or congressman.

Yellow Calf "is 'found' at the end of the story dedicatedly working to protect Indian water rights" (Stromberg 34) in North Dakota. His move out of the city and onto a reservation in the Dakotas symbolizes his return to his tribal framework. Rather than attempting to help his tribe, and other tribes of Native America, through governmental methods that would serve to further abstract him from his tribe and place him in the political arena, he re-establishes his connections with tribal concerns. He returns to the land and uses his knowledge of the United States' legal system to fight for tribal rights by involving himself directly with the reservation and the tribal members.

Through his four narratives, Welch provides a spectrum of learning. The protagonists' abilities to reintegrate themselves within a tribal framework, and thus to heal, directly correlates to their exposure to tribal stories. Fools Crow lives in a world infused with tribal signifiers and stories. Jim Loney occupies the other end of the spectrum; he has no access to tribal stories or to a tribal framework. His inability to attain healing through stories ultimately leads to his death. Sylvester Yellow Calf and the nameless narrator of *Winter in the Blood* both overcome their detachment from their respective tribal frameworks through their access to, and acceptance of, tribal stories. The stories offer a link that connects them to their tribes. According to Welch, tribal stories teach survival.

Teaching Survival: Nature, Ancestors, Dream Visions, and Animal Helpers

James Welch uses his novels to depict the importance of tribal stories for tribal survival. The stories dissolve the boundaries and barriers constructed spatially due to their ties to nature and to tribal social relations. Through nature, ancestors, dream visions, and animal helpers, the stories heal and ensure the survival of tribal traditions. The stories combat the barriers imposed on Native America and the Native Americans by the Napikwan. Barriers exist peripherally in *Fools Crow*, and they only hinder the Napikwan; however, the hint of these barriers remain ever present and threatening to the Pikuni. In *Fools Crow*, the Napikwans' influence remains noticeable absent in the landscape:

No freeways, fences, none of the symbols of modern alienation Welch has used so effectively in his previous work. Trading posts and forts, and a few ranches intrude upon the land, representing the growing conflict between tribes and whitemen, but they do not dominate¹⁶⁷.

Instead of the barriers that chart and map the United States of America, Welch's description of the landscape relies on the natural landmarks of Native America¹⁶⁸. Even the landmarks were "more

¹⁶⁷ Kathleen Mullen Sands, "Closing the Distance: Critic, Reader and the Works of James Welch," *MELUS* 14.2 (1987): 81.

¹⁶⁸ Kathleen Mullen Sands notes that "Welch's intention as a novelist is clear. He wants to yank us right out of our trucks and cars and get us out there on the land, immersed in the experiences of it, a little manure on our city-bought boots" (77). He attempts to remove the masks provided by maps, freeways, cars—inventions of "[w]estern cultural traditions" (Ruppert, *Mediation in*

than...landmark[s] to the Pikunis, Kainahs, and Sisikas, the three tribes of the Blackfeet" (*Fools Crow* 3). The landmarks also hold mythical significance for the tribes "for it was on top of Chief Mountain that the blackhorn skull pillows of the great warriors still lay" (3), and therefore they are regarded as integral to, rather than separate from, the tribes. The uncharted landscape of *Fools Crow* contrasts sharply with the landscapes described in Welch's other narratives. Even the official, but artificially and arbitrarily created, border between Canada and the United States remains "defined by Blackfoot language" (Owens 158) as the Medicine Line. The Blackfoot refuse to recognize the border as a barrier, but see it more as an easily negotiable line. The Pikuni ignore the authority vested in the border and often seek refuge and "sneak off across the Medicine Line into Canada, knowing full well that...[soldiers] could not pursue them into that country" (*Fools Crow* 279). The Pikuni realizes that the soldiers are bound by an invisible and artificial boundary of their own creation. Alternatively, the Pikuni take advantage of their ability to travel across and through the artificial boundary to safety. In his remaining three stories, the buildings, ranches, and boundaries alluded to in *Fools Crow* dominate the landscape of Montana.

Towards the end of the narrative, *Fools Crow* witnesses a future school scene, and "the ground the children played on" was surrounded by "a fence made of twisted wire and pointed barbs" (*Fools Crow* 359). In Welch's remaining three novels, the landscapes are dominated by the fences: spatially constructed barriers. Loney's Euroamerican girlfriend in *The Death of Jim Loney*, Rhea, claims that "There were always barriers, some artificial, some natural" (105). Her attitude represents a propensity to perceive spatial barriers as reality rather than as social constructions. *Fools Crow* illustrates that barriers and boundaries have *not* always existed, at least in Native America. The barriers imposed by the colonizers onto the landscape feature prominently in Welch's other stories: in *The Death of Jim Loney*, "They were walking beside a barbed-wire fence" (75); in *Winter in the Blood*, the narrator "slid through the barbed-wire fence" (2) and even on his mother's land on the reservation he "followed the fence line to the west" (63); and in *The Indian Lawyer*, Sly lives in a city dominated by buildings and he works for a prison—the extreme product of barriers—distinguished by "the uniformity of it all, the cinder-block buildings, the maze of sidewalks, the guard towers, the dirt parking lot...endless Cyclone fences" (33). Although these images seem to prevail over the landscape, they fail to contain or mask nature. Both the nameless narrator in *Winter in the Blood* and Sylvester Yellow Calf recognize that the barriers are artificial and superficial:

The fence hadn't been there in the beginning...But the other things, the cottonwoods and willows, the open spaces of the valley, the hills to the south, the Little Rockies, had all been there then; none had changed. (*Winter in the Blood* 161)

Despite attempts to confine the landscape, nature perseveres. Nature disregards the fences and freeways constructed by man. In *Winter in the Blood*, all that stands of a house is a roof that "had fallen in and the mud between the logs had fallen out in chunks, leaving a bare gray skeleton, home only to mice and insects" (1), and in *The Indian Lawyer*, all that remains of mansions that stood in a once prominent area of Helena are "memories, the ruins of a stone wall, a section of rusted iron fence,

a broken bird bath overgrown with weeds" (41). Like Linda Hogan, Welch depicts the continuance of nature and nature's disregard for spatial barriers.

Loney fails to recognize the temporal quality of the boundaries because he fails to forge a connection with nature. A natural butte exists in visual range from Harlem. Lonely mostly views Snake Butte through the window or at a distance, and "He didn't like the butte" (*The Death of Jim Loney* 88). He recognizes his own distance from the land. He claims that he "never understood it. Once in a while I look around and I see things familiar and I think I will die here. It is my country then" (106-7). Loney believes that he will only achieve connection with the land through his death. Unlike Sly and the nameless narrator who both return to the land, Loney lives an alienated existence within four walls of a house. In Harlem, the town in which he lives, "The houses...were bundled up...The low brick buildings of downtown reflected nothing of the sun and nothing stirred" (27). On one level, Loney's description of the houses merely offers readers a portrayal of the town and the weather; however, on another level Welch alludes to the fact that houses, spatially constructed buildings, reflect none of the characteristics of nature. Nature, according to Welch and his contemporaries, contains no barriers or boundaries. Fools Crow, the narrator of *Winter in the Blood*, and Sly refute Loney's belief that connection with the land results only from death. For the other protagonists, their relationship with the land stems from their ties to their tribes and to tribal stories.

Unlike Fools Crow, who remains firmly connected to the land and the tribal traditions that rely so heavily on nature, the nameless narrator and Sly initially struggle with the same detachment from the land that Loney experiences. The same Montana landscape found in *Fools Crow* has suffered from the introduction of Napikwan to Native America. In *Winter in the Blood*, "The fertility of the river is doubly suspect because, in spite of the fact that... 'white men from the fish department...stocked the river with pike,' there is no actual proof of fish in the river" (Owens 131). The landscape that once provided sustenance for the Blackfeet tribes no longer provides in the same way: the integrated relationship between tribe and land has been severed. In addition, the first image of the land offered to readers in *Winter in the Blood* is a "borrow pit" (1) on the Earthboys land. The narrator reveals to readers that the Earthboys no longer live there. Louis Owens explores the significance of the burrow pit. He claims that it "is an excavation from which earth has been taken for use elsewhere, earth appropriated or 'borrowed'" (Owens 129). The image reflects the appropriation of Native America by its colonizers and alludes to the gradual, but persistent, separation of American Indians from the land. Owens discusses the ramifications of Welch's opening to *Winter in the Blood*:

The suggestive name of the Earthboys hints at the traditional Indian males who have disappeared from the Blackfoot world Welch describes—those Indians who once lived, secure in their identities, close to the earth. Throughout the novel, Welch will provide portraits and glimpses of Indian men who have ceased to know themselves or their places in the world, men directionless and powerless who leave vacuums that must be filled by desperate women. (129-30)

According to Owens, Welch uses this opening scene to illustrate the now pervasive separation, merely hinted at in *Fools Crow*, from the land and the tribe that contemporary Native Americans experience. Despite Jim Loney who represents an American Indian who never achieves connection with the land, Welch resists a narrative that predicts the demise of American Indian traditions and way of life. Both

on the land and in nature rather than viewing land as empty space to subjugate and dominate. He recognized the "beauty in these creatures and he had quit trying to explain why. It was enough to hold these plains in his memory and it was enough to come back to them" (158). Significantly, he moves out of the city and back onto a reservation in North Dakota to help with a legal case concerning water rights. On the reservation, "there were always waterfowl, ducks and geese, sometimes swans and pelicans, cranes and osprey. Deer and antelope" (341). The nature and fertility of the reservation contrasts to the sterile buildings found in Helena, Montana. Through his rejection of the city, he reaffirms his connection to the land.

Ancestors also play a crucial role in Welch's stories and in tribal stories. For Welch, ancestors bridge the perceived gap between mythic/historical stories and contemporary reality. In *Fools Crow*, the protagonist remains "strong with all the power of the Pikunis" (115). His ritual journeys, visions, actions, and survival succeed only in conjunction with his tribal framework. This framework incorporates ancestors, land, animals, and stories. Welch relates a tale about the Above Ones early in his narrative. One of the characters of that mythic story, "So-at-sa-ki, Feather Woman"¹⁷¹ also participates in *Fools Crow*'s dream vision. Welch includes Feather Woman into *Fools Crow* in both the mythic story and the main narrative, and deliberately dissolves the barriers between mythic tales and his own stories. Nora Barry, in her article "A Myth to Be Alive: James Welch's *Fools Crow*," reveals the connections between Welch's narrative and tribal stories:

Welch evokes the past by retelling ancient Blackfeet myths, describes the present by implicitly paralleling *Fools Crow*'s life to the lives of his contemporaries and to a certain extent to culture hero myths, and predicts the future by explicitly connecting his hero to an extension of the myth of Feather Woman. (3)

Welch's narrative collapses past, present, future, myth, and reality through *Fools Crow*¹⁷². *Fools Crow*'s connection to the tribe, to the land, and to animals also remains tied to his association with Mik-api: another character from the Blackfeet tribes' oral tradition. His tribal survival remains firmly rooted to a tribal framework that relies upon ancestors as a source of knowledge.

Jim Loney's only relative is his sister Kate, and therefore he remains unable to overcome his all encompassing detachment. At one point he remembers meeting a Gros Ventre medicine man named Emil Cross Guns, but "Emil was dead now and those days were gone to Loney...the old ones

from a Pikuni perception. According to Owens, "Seen through Blackfoot eyes, the landscape has immediate presence; it is intimate and fully inhabited and its signs are read in direct relation to their interpenetration within the lives of the people and animals" (162). The ex-confederate soldier from Georgia states that "The rolling prairies were as vast and *empty* as a pale ocean [emphasis added]" (*Fools Crow* 289). He also "worked one whole year for a rancher, building corrals" in Texas "whose open *spaces* held no threat [emphasis added]" (290). He participates in, and perpetuates, the containment of the open country. Throughout his narratives, Welch criticizes the perception that land exists as empty space, and he strives to disrupt the dominant discourse that led to the spatial confinement of Native America.

¹⁷¹ Charles G. Ballard, "The Question of Survival in *Fools Crow*," *North Dakota Quarterly* 59.4 (1991): 253.

¹⁷² Welch also disrupts the boundaries between fiction, art, and reality in *Fools Crow*. *Fools Crow*, before each section, contains pictorial representations of the stories contained in Welch's narrative. In addition, the design that Feather Woman draws for *Fools Crow* comes to life. As he looks at the skin, "the horses began to move; almost imperceptibly, the horses came alive" (353-54). Art and reality, art and life, become one.

did not exist" (*The Death of Jim Loney* 102). The death of the old ones reflects Loney's inability to forge connections with any tribal mentors. The nameless narrator and Sly both achieve connection to their respective tribal frameworks with the help of their ancestors. Both men have Native American grandmothers:

Grandmothers in almost all Native American cultures carry a special significance. They are the ones who pass on the stories from past generations to the young, and, indeed, are the central characters in both the spiritual and daily lives of the community. (Tardieu 78)

Through his grandmother characters, Welch fulfills Feather Woman's prophecy that the children would still have access to the stories. In addition, Welch's grandparents symbolize "the original beings" of "Blackfoot tradition... Old Man (Na'pi) and Old Woman (Kipitaki)" (Owens 143). The grandparents in his narratives serve to catalyze the re-stitching of the protagonists into tribal stories. Sly's grandmother provides him with tribal stories and the protective medicine bundle of one of his ancestors. The nameless narrator's grandmother and grandfather also provide him with stories. Through the grandparents and ancestors, "A powerful link has been forged with the traditional world of the Blackfeet" (Owens 143). According to Welch, tribal survival to some degree depends upon continued connections with ancestors through tribal stories. Ancestors continue to help Welch's protagonists despite death: death fails to act as a barrier.

Dream visions also play a critical role in Welch's novels. They teach survival often in conjunction with ancestors and animals. Fools Crow also learns to interpret his visions through his association with Mik-api and his animal helpers. Owens discloses the information that Mik-api "the 'many-faces' man of the novel, bears the name of a figure from Blackfoot oral tradition: Mik-a'pi or Red Old Man" (159). Through Fools Crow's association with his tribe's oral tradition and his links with other tribal members, he learns to 'read' his dreams. At the beginning of the narrative, he has yet to learn how to interpret his dreams. Before he begins the fateful horse raid with Yellow Kidney and Fast Horse, Mik-api purifies Fools Crow and instructs him in the use of "yellow paint" which will help him "gain the strength and cunning necessary to be successful" (23). After Fools Crow's purification ritual, he begins to dream:

He was in the middle of an enemy camp and it was a bright winter night...A black dog approached him and then walked away....This time it looked back to him as though it wanted him to follow. The dog led the way through the camp until they came to a lodge on the far side. It was simply decorated...He pulled back the entrance skin and saw several dark shapes around the perimeter of the lodge. As his eyes adjusted, he saw that the shapes weren't breathing. Then, opposite him, one of the shapes lifted its sleeping robe and he saw that it was a young white-faced girl. She beckoned to him, and in fright he turned to leave. But as he turned away he looked back and saw the girl's eyes desired him. (17)

This dream plagues him for many consecutive nights, and "During the long silent night walks he had tried to interpret the dream...but the meaning was as far from his grasp as the stars" (23). He also debates whether he ought to share the dream with the other horse raiders, but he decides against it. He later learns that his vision prophesized the events leading to Yellow Kidney's punishment by the Above Ones. During the raid, Yellow Kidney enters a tepee that contains young girls laying in a row.

He sleeps with one of the girls only to later realize that she “was dying of the white-scabs disease” (75). His violation of a dying girl creates a series of events that result in his mutilation, his inability to provide for his family, and his eventual death. Fools Crow’s father does not castigate him for his failure to interpret the vision, but rather for his failure to share the dream with the other members of the raid. His dream depicts the interrelatedness of the tribe and its members: they often dream for and of each other. By keeping the dream to himself, he remains partially responsible for the ensuing events.

Fools Crow’s actions contrast with Eagle Rib’s on their journey. Eagle Rib’s recounts a dream he has after the raid:

In my dream I saw a small white horse wandering in the snow. Its hooves were split and it had sores all over. It was wearing a bridle and the reins trailed after it. But it was the eyes. I looked into the eyes and they were white and unseeing. As I drew closer I saw across its back fingers of blood. (*Fools Crow* 35-6)

After the recounting of Eagle Rib’s dream, one of the other members of the raid reacted and “Rattler drew in his breath. He had heard of such a horse from his grandfather” (36). He realizes that “it was the death horse” (36). The ability of the men to interpret the dream stems from the knowledge of their predecessors. Through information that has been passed down through the oral tradition, the tribe benefits from the knowledge of the “long-ago people” (29). As Fools Crow acquires more knowledge through Mik-api and through his animal helpers, he learns to interpret his dreams successfully. Later towards the end of the narrative, during a hunting party, he dreams again. This time, although his “dream was less than clear” and he does “not attach much importance to it” (376), he shares it with the “hunt leader” (375). He has learned from past mistakes and from the past. Through his connections to tribal stories and to other members of the tribe, he learns to interpret his dreams.

Dreams also function to further destabilize the distinctions made between dreams and reality in *Fools Crow*. Dreams prophesize and merge into reality. Both Eagle Rib’s and Fools Crow’s dreams discussed earlier hint at events that unfold later in the narrative. In addition, after Fools Crow helps a wolverine escape from a hunter’s trap the first time, he repeats the favor a second time in his dreams. During his dream, he sleeps with his father’s youngest wife whom he has admired throughout the narrative. She simultaneously dreams of sleeping with a wolverine who subsequently bites off her finger which turns into a stone. Fools Crow realizes that in the dream “Wolverine had cleansed both him and Kills-close-to-the-lake” (*Fools Crow* 125). In this portion of the narrative, “These dreams connect with everyday reality in that Kills-close-to-the-lake has sacrificed a finger and has given a white stone to Fools Crow” (Barry, “A Myth to Be Alive” 12). His dreams of wolverine provide “White Man’s Dog [with] his power, in the white stone and the song” (*Fools Crow* 125). Fools Crow’s ability to merge dreams with reality results in his power and maturation.

Jim Loney also experiences visions. Unlike Fools Crow, however, he lacks the tribal interpretive framework that provides the knowledge necessary to understand his visions/dreams. He experiences waking dreams of a bird. He attempts “to attach some significance to it, but the bird remained as real and as elusive as the wine and cigarettes and his own life” (*The Death of Jim Loney* 21). His inability to understand the significance of the bird stems from his inability to connect with his mother’s tribal framework. He has no grandparents or other tribal members to teach him how to

interpret his vision. He even remains uncertain of why he visions. He "Sometimes...think[s] it is a vision sent by my mother's people" (105), but he remains unsure. Later, on a hunt with his friend Pretty Weasel, he encounters a bear, but "he cannot accept the presence of the bear" (Owens 152-53). Just as he believes that the old ones are dead, he believes that "There were no bears anymore" (*The Death of Jim Loney* 117). He fails to interpret his visions accurately.

Although Loney's bird cannot communicate with Loney, Fools Crow's dreams always occur in conjunction with an animal helper. Even in the beginning of his narrative, his dream of Yellow Kidney's actions incorporates the help of dog although he has problems interpreting dogs actions. Later, he also sees "The ghost of...[a] dead dog...[and] ghosts of horses" (*Fools Crow* 229). The animal ghosts, like the ancestors, illustrate that death is not a barrier. Loney also has a dog, but "He was very old and deaf" (*The Death of Jim Loney* 12) and he never speaks to Loney. In contrast to the protagonist in *Fools Crow*, the only animals that Loney converses with are dogs that never answer back. However, Loney chooses to entrust a message for the boy Amos with a dog: an animal helper. Conversely, Fools Crow learns to communicate with a Raven, who reveals information to both Mikapi and him through dreams and stories¹⁷³. Raven "speak[s] many languages" (*Fools Crow* 56). Fools Crow also speaks to wolverine and some of the tribal stories relate occasions when someone spoke to a frog, beavers, and "All the living things in the country of the Pikunis had given their songs to the medicine bundle" (70). The ability of the humans and animals to communicate relies on their interrelated relationship and on tribal knowledge. At one point in the novel, Fools Crow becomes wolf in order to remove rabies from Yellow Kidney's son One Spot. Fools Crow got "down on all fours, circling the body, swinging his head from side to side, growling and snapping his teeth at One Spot" (267). Welch collapses the barriers between human and animal through Fools Crow. Yellow Calf, in *Winter in the Blood*, also understands animals. He stands "listening to two magpies argue" (70), and he also converses with deer. Welch contests perceived barriers between human and animals. Instead, his narratives depict the two conversing and co-existing to their mutual benefit.

Initially, the barriers that sever human from animal seem resurrected in *Winter in the Blood*. The incident concerning Amos the duck and his siblings, discussed in an earlier footnote, signifies on many different levels. Firstly, the narrator's family acquires the ducks as prizes at a fair. This signifies the damaged relationship between nature and the tribe. His family has internalized the dominant social group's propensity to view animals and nature as objects separate from themselves.

¹⁷³ In a similar manner to his contemporaries, Welch illustrates his skepticism of the propensity to privilege one language. Not only do animals speak in his narratives, but Welch hints at other forms of communication as well. After Yellow Kidney's capture and mutilation during the initial horse raid, he stumbles into a camp of the Spotted Horse People. He seems to converse with them through what appear to be pan plains-tribal signs: "Then he made the sign for Spotted Horse People" (*Fools Crow* 79) and another woman "knelt beside me and gave the sign for medicine woman" (80). Welch's characters communicate through sign language. The Blackfeet rely on a wide range of communicative languages rather than one bound language. John Doughty's article on Indian Sign Language claims that it "was the primary language of trade and commerce...with the same signs used almost universally with only slight variations from tribe to tribe" (17). John Doughty, "Talking Hands: The Quiet Language of Early Native Americans," *Colorado Country Life Magazine* April 2000: 16-18.

They attempt to 'keep' the ducks¹⁷⁴. This decision later ends in disaster. The narrator relates the circumstances surrounding the death of all of the ducks except for Amos:

We dug a hole in the ground big enough for the washtub to fit, and deep enough so that its lip would be even with the ground level. Then we filled the tub to the lip so that the ducks could climb in and out as they chose. But we hadn't counted on the ducks drinking the water and splashing it out as they ruffled their wings.
(16)

Effectively, the narrator and his brother Mose create an *artificial* pond for the ducks. Despite their foresight to keep the edge of the tub flush with the ground, as the water level decreases in the tub the sides of the tub act as barriers. The death of the ducks directly results from these barriers. As discussed in previous chapters, the American Indian authors discussed in this thesis directly link tribal frameworks and stories to nature. Ron Gable observes that "community," as American Indian authors perceive it, "includes all parts of the world—animate and inanimate...such as trees, animals, water, earth, and rock. For Native Americans, there is no separation between the spiritual, personal, and social worlds" (38). Despite Teresa's occupation as a rancher and her view of animals as something to own, which indicate her acceptance of, and her assimilation into, Euroamerican constructions of social relations, ironically she still recognizes the connections between Native Americans and nature. As discussed in the earlier footnote, she links Native Americans to ducks. Welch uses the death of the ducks as an example of the damaging effects that barriers have on Native Americans.

Welch's narratives avoid imposing human characteristics onto animals. Animals exist as sentient creatures with their own personalities, but as connected to humans. In *Fools Crow*, Welch describes the thought process of Feather Woman's dog:

His eyes were less on the man than on the clothes, which were a few paces nearer. He considered the distance and the amount of time it would take to get to the clothes. He could feel the muscles tense in his hind legs, and his front paws curled slightly to gain purchase on the sandy soil. But just as he lifted his head, carefully, deliberately, he felt the woman's kick on his left thigh.
(327)

The dog engages in dog thoughts. Welch refuses to impose human characteristics to the animals. Yellow Calf, in *Winter in the Blood*, talks to the narrator about his conversations with the deer. The narrator wants to impose his perceptions of what deer discuss onto the deer: a product of his inculcation into "[w]estern cultural traditions" (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3). Yellow Calf quickly dissuades him of that notion. He explains that "They leave" the talk of weather "'to men.' He sucked on his lips. 'No, they seem to talk mostly about...'"—he searched the room with a peculiar alertness—"well, about the days gone by" (*Winter in the Blood* 68). Through Feather Woman's dog and Yellow Calf's deer, Welch contests the invaders' "parochial view of reality" (Freire 159). Welch's inclusion of animals, crucial elements of tribal stories, into his narratives again helps disrupt the boundaries between the past and present. Mythic time and the present merge because animals still teach survival to the Pikuni. Welch also uses animals to

¹⁷⁴ The family also owns cattle and farms alfalfa, which further alludes to the family's acceptance of Euroamerican attitudes and beliefs.

demonstrate the plurality of languages and to collapse the barrier between animal and human while simultaneously illustrating their differences.

Welch offers his narratives as new tribal stories for a new generation of Blackfeet. *Fools Crow* narrates the history of the Blackfeet during the first stages of Manifest Destiny and hints at the subsequent confinement of Native America. *The Death of Jim Loney*, *Winter in the Blood*, and *The Indian Lawyer* recount the tribe's post-invasion history. While Welch relates the disastrous effects that result from the cultural invasion of Native America, he also offers hope through his narratives. Hope and healing emerge out of the continuation of stories, which bind people together through a common history, traditions, and framework. Through the stories, Welch heals his protagonists by contesting physical and conceptual barriers, which sever his characters from the land and their tribal framework.

Chapter 4: Contesting Individual Identity through Polymorphic Collectivity and Reconnection in Louise Erdrich's Writings

Nature, Incest, Deviance, and Death: Unsettling Spatially Configured Physical and Social Boundaries in Louise Erdrich's Fiction

Louise Erdrich's six novels, *Love Medicine*, *The Beet Queen*, *Tracks*, *The Bingo Palace*, *Tales of Burning Love*, and *The Antelope Wife* relate stories of multiple and interconnected characters. *Love Medicine*, *Tracks*, and *The Bingo Palace* narrate the stories of different Chippewa families, the Morrisseys, the Pillagers, the Nanapushes, the Lamartines, the Kashpaws, and other tribal members on the reservation. Conversely, her other three novels, *The Beet Queen*, *Tales of Burning Love*, and *The Antelope Wife*, occur in towns and cities rather than on the reservation; however, all of the novels are linked "mouth to tail"¹⁷⁵ by common characters, or their relatives. Many critics, however, attack *The Beet Queen* because it differs from her other novels in that it "is Erdrich's exploration of the European side of her heritage"¹⁷⁶. Susan Castillo defends Erdrich's decision to write *The Beet Queen*:

While it is true that she has German-American as well as Chippewa blood, the fact that she chooses to focus on this facet of her ancestry in *The Beet Queen* can hardly be construed as a betrayal of her Chippewa roots. ("Postmodernism, Native American Literature and the Real" 288)

Although the characters in *The Beet Queen* are not all Native Americans, the novel does address many of the issues that emerge in her other fictional works¹⁷⁷. In addition, the book remains linked to her other novels through Erdrich's decision to include relatives of her Native American characters from other books.

¹⁷⁵ Louise Erdrich, *Tracks* (London: Flamingo, 1988) 46.

¹⁷⁶ Dennis M. Walsh and Ann Braley, "The Indianness of Louise Erdrich's *The Beet Queen*: Latency as Presence," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 18.3 (1994): 6.

¹⁷⁷ As James Ruppert asserts, "For Erdrich, plot is far less important than the voices of her characters" ("Mediation and Multiple Narrative in *Love Medicine*" 230). Erdrich's novels, particularly *The Bingo Palace*, *The Beet Queen*, and *Tales of Burning Love* have come under attack for their poor plots; however, I believe that these novels still contribute to an understanding of Erdrich's projects.

Like her characters, her novels remain connected through convoluted relationships that manifest themselves in stories. Not only do her novels remain linked to each other through common stories and characters, but they also exhibit kinship links to other Native American written narratives. Robert Silberman claims that "works by Native American authors...[bear] a striking family resemblance to one another"¹⁷⁸. Through the interconnected relationship of her stories to each other and to other Native American novels, Erdrich combines form with function. Just as the stories of her characters unsettle physical and social boundaries, her stories challenge the perceived containment that the covers of books provide as physical and spatial boundaries. Like myths that are part of American Indians' oral traditions, her stories are never "over and done with" (Young 278). Her stories¹⁷⁹ and characters span the book covers and, in this manner, they collapse physical boundaries. The connection between her characters and their stories serves "to blur the lines of conventional fiction. When one story or character overlaps with others, the reader becomes further enmeshed in their lives"¹⁸⁰. Through her narrative style, Erdrich incorporates readers into her stories. She collapses the boundaries between outside and inside that have traditionally positioned readers outside the text, and includes them in her stories. Through nature, incest, deviance, and death, Erdrich begins her project to collapse boundaries: physical boundaries of the body and social boundaries.

Erdrich uses nature, and the tribe's links to nature, to dissolve physical boundaries. Unlike Linda Hogan, however, her nature imagery does not dominate the book. Although she does explicitly state her perception of nature's lack of spatial boundaries, she instead focuses on her characters' relationships to each other to combat the separation the results from the creation of artificial boundaries. Robert Silberman claims that Erdrich often "has inserted a broad political and historical point, then channeled the narrative back to a seemingly personal issue" (114). Erdrich not only depicts the effects that the United States' legal policies have on tribal members, but she also illustrates the interrelated relationship between nature, the tribe, and its members by continually bringing her focus back to her characters. Despite the different emphasis in theme throughout her novels, she does, as Rainwater points out, however appear to share a similar perception of the "dynamic motion of nature" (*Dreams of Fiery Stars* 65) with other American Indian writers.

Erdrich writes to counteract territorial perceptions of the land. She writes against the people "who come looking for profit, who draw lines across the land with their strings and yellow flags" (*Tracks* 9). Although these issues appear to remain peripheral to her characters' social relations, her "broad political and historical point[s]" (Silberman 114) intimately inform their social relations.

¹⁷⁸ Robert Silberman, "Opening the Text: *Love Medicine* and the Return of the Native American Woman," *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*, ed. Gerald Vizenor (London: U of Oklahoma P, 1993) 101.

¹⁷⁹ Jennifer Sergi observes that, "As Nanapush is exploring the dichotomous nature of the transition from orality to writing, so is Erdrich. Readers are learning of the Chippewas' oral tradition through a printed text" (282). Although Erdrich's novels incorporate techniques and themes from her tribe's oral tradition, and thus remain linked to a tribal framework, her stories are written narratives. Jennifer Sergi, "Storytelling: Tradition and Preservation in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*," *World Literatures Today* 66.2 (1992): 279-82.

¹⁸⁰ Margie Towery, "Continuity and Connection: Characters in Louise Erdrich's Fiction," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 16.4 (1992): 108.

Nanapush, one of her trickster characters in *Tracks*¹⁸¹ equates the well being of his tribe with nature's lack of boundaries. Despite attempts to "draw lines across the land" (*Tracks* 9), he believes that "the earth is limitless...and so were our people once" (*Tracks* 1). He believes that land remains, present tense, limitless despite the dominant social group's territorial and possessive attitude towards it; however, his use of the past tense to describe the tribe depicts his concerns for his people.

He equates the tribe's disintegration with the introduction of spatial barriers and territorial attitudes. Nanapush asserts that "Before the boundaries were set, before the sickness scattered the clans like gambling sticks...An old man had some relatives, got a chance to pass his name on, especially if the name was an important one like Nanapush" (*Tracks* 32). The spatial boundaries that divide the land and the tribe into individuals, a concept based on territorial configurations of the self, have affected the tribe's future. Nanapush's name "is...very close to Nanabozho, the Chippewa trickster" (Towery 104), and the discontinuation of his name signifies the breakdown of tribal traditions. Nanapush, however, is able to ensure the continuation both of his name in an unconventional manner, and also his traditional trickster characteristics, through Lulu who "carries on both family lines" (Towery 101): the Pillagers, a family who continued living according to tribal traditions, and the Nanapushes. Through Erdrich's other novels, we learn that the tribe has lost many of its traditional practices to a narrative of greed and profit; however, Susan Castillo, in her article "The Construction of Gender and Ethnicity in the Texts of Leslie Silko and Louise Erdrich", argues that "Erdrich's characters are Indians who live in a twentieth-century world...but they are funny, feisty survivors who...adapt and transform what they find useful in contemporary culture"¹⁸². Although traditional relations have dissolved due to physical and social barriers, its members have formed new relationships based on old traditional notions of kinship and new social relations that enable them to adapt to current situations.

Her character Lipsha discusses the differences between nature and territory. He considers the geographical configuration of South Dakota and Kansas:

It isn't that I really have a thing against those places, understand, it's just that the straight-edged shape is not a Chippewa preference. You look around, and everything you see is round, everything in nature. There are no perfect boundaries, no natural borders except winding rivers. Only human-made things tend towards cubes and squares¹⁸³.

According to Lipsha, Chippewas' worldview relies on their knowledge of nature. Rivers, the only boundaries found in nature, are not impassable boundaries but can actually facilitate movement. The constructs created by Euroamerican culture, however, have "perfect boundaries" (*The Bingo Palace* 80) and straight lines: containers like "cubes and squares" (*The Bingo Palace* 80). Cities reflect the spatial characteristics of cubes and squares.

¹⁸¹ Joni Adamson Clarke, "Why Bears are Good to Think and Theory Doesn't Have to be Murder: Transformation and Oral Tradition in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 4.1 (1992): 32.

¹⁸² Susan Perez Castillo, "The Construction of Gender and Ethnicity in the Texts of Leslie Silko and Louise Erdrich," *Yearbook of English Studies* 24 (1994): 233.

¹⁸³ Louise Erdrich, *The Bingo Palace* (London: Flamingo, 1994) 80.

The Antelope Wife, Louise Erdrich's latest novel, mainly takes place in the city of Minneapolis with her characters travelling back and forth from the city to the reservation. Through their mobility, the characters demonstrate that spatial barriers, like reservations, exist more as social constructs than as reality and are therefore ineffectual. One of Erdrich's characters, Klaus, discusses nature's lack of boundaries versus the city. Klaus claims that "Earth and sky touch everywhere and nowhere, like sex between two strangers. There is no definition and no union for sure. If you chase that line, it will retreat from you at the same pace you set" (21). The lack of a definite boundary that Klaus observes between the land and sky collapses the distinctions and categories used to define nature. Spatial boundaries do not occur in nature, but are instead human constructs because "Only humans see that line as an actual place" (*The Antelope Wife* 21). Nature resists lines and barriers, but cities are configured and constructed by erecting boundaries due to the belief that the "line" is "an actual place" (*The Antelope Wife* 21). Erdrich depicts Minneapolis as a place "where everything is set out clear in lines and neatly labeled, where you can hide from the great sky, forget" (*The Antelope Wife* 25). She creates an opposition through images of an expansive sky versus a cordoned off and bound city. The city's configuration provides a place to "forget" (*The Antelope Wife* 25) links to tribes and nature, and it obscures "the great sky" (*The Antelope Wife* 25). Spatial boundaries mask the dynamic characteristics of nature and reality. Erdrich does not perceive reality through spatial categories but as nature depicts it, as free from boundaries.

Klaus abducts his antelope wife, Sweetheart Calico, from the "place where sky meets earth" (*The Antelope Wife* 32) and takes her to the city where "She seems to forget her daughters, their wanting eyes, the grand space, the air" (*The Antelope Wife* 30-1). Erdrich depicts the city's spatial construction as responsible for the breakdown of kinship bonds, tribal bonds, and tribal links to nature. After Sweetheart Calico's abduction, a tribe suffers. Jimmy claims that the tribe's "luck is changing. Our houses caved in with the winter's snow and our work is going for grabs" and "There's misery in the air. The fish are mushy inside" (*The Antelope Wife* 33). Erdrich clearly links tribal welfare to the welfare of nature. Her character Sweetheart Calico, an antelope woman, suffers due to her containment in the city. Her suffering, in turn, negatively affects her tribe. The city severs "[t]he red rope between the mother and her baby" which symbolizes "the hope of our [American Indians'] nation" (*The Bingo Palace* 6). Sweetheart Calico forgets "her daughters" (*The Antelope Wife* 31) while she remains in the city. The spatially configured boundaries of the city sever her relationship to her children, and this incident symbolically represents the severed relationship between the tribe and its members, which is "the hope of our nation" (*The Bingo Palace* 6). Erdrich clearly depicts the role that physical and social boundaries play in removing tribal members from their tribal context.

Erdrich further criticizes a predilection to view land as territory rather than as living and dynamic. Due to the dominant social group's territorial attitude, "Most of the land is now half dead. Plowed up" (*The Antelope Wife* 132). A narrative of space as territory has literally caused spatial barriers to mask a dynamic and living earth. The authors' stories, however, are stories of regeneration and hope because she perceives spatial barriers as temporary and unstable:

Although driveways and houses, concrete parking garages and business stores cover the city's scape, the same land is hunched underneath. There are times, like now, I get this sense of the temporary. It could all blow off. And yet the sheer land would be

left underneath. Sand, rock, the Indian black seashell-bearing earth. (*The Antelope Wife* 124-25)

Erdrich depicts artificial constructs as lifeless and unsustainable barriers that nature constantly unsettles, while she attributes land with animal-like characteristics, through her image of the "land...hunched underneath" (*The Antelope Wife* 125), and ready for action. Although human constructs are temporary, the land will survive. In *Tales of Burning Love*, her character Jack Mauser subscribes to the belief that land can be spatially partitioned and owned as territory. According to the narrator, Jack's ties with his Ojibwa tribe have been mostly severed:

In Jack's case...the Ojibwa part of him was so buried it didn't know what it saw looking at the dirt or sky...Jack did not see land in the old-time Ojibwa sense, as belonging to nobody and nothing but itself. Land was something to use, space for sale...the ground he put his houses on was alive, could crumble, cave in, betray him, simply turn against him....Land seemed dead to Jack¹⁸⁴.

Despite Jack's indoctrination into a western worldview, the hill that "Mauser had raised...destabilized and part of it collapsed" (*Tales of Burning Love* 101). The land illustrates that it is alive by destabilizing both his hill and his belief that "Land seemed dead" (153). Again, Erdrich illustrates the instability of artificial barriers. She depicts Jack's attitude as directly related to his severed link to his Ojibwa framework.

Through her fiction, Erdrich contests the authority¹⁸⁵ of social, as well as physical, boundaries. She re-configures her characters' social relations and challenges the restrictions of the dominant social group's norms, or socially acceptable behavior. Her fiction contains instances of incest, which is a social relation prohibited by the laws of the U.S. Margie Towery suggests that "there is a hint of incest as Marie's son Gordie marries June Morrissey. Gordie's grandfather is June's great great-uncle" (103). This incident results in King's birth, but really has no further significance except to contest a reductive and non-Native perception of social relations. In *Tales of Burning Love*, Dot's relationship with Jack Mauser is also incestuous. She tells Jack that they are "probably related" (28). This incestuous relationship results in a humorous chain of events, which finally result in the connection between Jack's five living wives—June is dead—through stories, their inclusion into Erdrich's "complicated house"¹⁸⁶ of characters, and it also reunites Dot with Gerry Nanapush. Gerry is the product of Lulu's incestuous relationship with her mother's cousin Moses. This "is where events loop around and tangle again"¹⁸⁷. Lulu seeks out Moses, her mother's cousin, and binds him to her through love medicine. She "bent him like a stem of grass marking...[her] trail" (*Love Medicine*

¹⁸⁴ Louise Erdrich, *Tales of Burning Love* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1996) 152-53.

¹⁸⁵ Susan Castillo observes that "Authority...is socially validated and implies a hierarchical chain of command and control" ("Women Aging into Power" 14). Susan Castillo, "Women Aging Into Power: Fictional Representations of Power and Authority in Louise Erdrich's Female Characters," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 8.4 (Winter 1996): 13-20. Authority, a concept based on superiority, serves to privilege the dominant discourse, and to legitimize and perpetuate cultural invasion.

¹⁸⁶ Louise Erdrich, *The Beet Queen*, (London: Flamingo, 1986) 176.

¹⁸⁷ Louise Erdrich, *Love Medicine: New and Expanded Version* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993) 128.

80). Nanapush objects because Moses is “[t]oo close a relation” (*Love Medicine* 75). While the first and last examples of incestuous relationships also upset tribal members, indicating that incest is also prohibited within the tribe, Lulu’s relationship with Moses ensures the continuation of both the Pillager and the Nanapush family through their son Gerry Nanapush, a character whose significance will emerge later in the chapter. Dot and Gerry’s relationship results in a daughter, Shawn, who exhibits characteristics of the Pillager family. Erdrich links the tribe’s survival to Lulu’s breach of socially permissible behavior¹⁸⁸. As a trickster figure in Erdrich’s fiction, Lulu “breaks the rules” (Tower 104) by transgressing social barriers and secures the tribe’s survival. Through incest, Erdrich breaks down a social boundary and simultaneously equates collapsing spatial barriers with the tribe’s survival.

Erdrich also transgresses social boundaries through a dog. A dog narrates another story of a sexually deviant act in *The Antelope Wife*. Erdrich unsettles conventional social boundaries in two ways: a dog relates a humorous story, and the story unsettles the boundaries of socially acceptable norms that regulate sexual behavior. The dog relates a joke to Klaus about a Chippewa dog and his sexual encounter with his owner:

‘She was working on the carpet in front of me and usually, even though I’m not fixed, I’ve got a fair amount of self-control. But then she bent over right in front of me and I just lost it. I went right for her.’

‘Sexually?’ asked the others.

‘Yeah,’ the Ojibwa dog admitted.

‘Gee,’ said the other dogs, shaking their heads... ‘So she’s putting you to sleep too.’

‘Gaween,’ said the Ojibwa dog, modestly. ‘You know us Chippewa dogs, we got the love medicine. Me, I’m getting a shampoo and my nails clipped.’ (*The Antelope Wife* 128)

Erdrich uses this sexually deviant and humorous account of a dog’s sexual encounter with his owner to collapse socially accepted boundaries. Vine Deloria Jr. addresses the importance of humor in his book *Custer Died for Your Sins*. He claims that “Tribes are being brought together by sharing humor” (147). In a similar manner, Erdrich uses humor to disrupt social boundaries that divide her characters from their tribe, and then to bring them together by re-stitching them into a tribal framework through (humorous) stories.

In *The Antelope Wife*, the conception and survival of the entire story and the characters depend on an act of social deviance. The narrator begins the first chapter with a story about a white soldier named Scranton Roy, and the bizarre incidents that led to his adoption of an American Indian baby girl. The characters throughout the remainder of the novel are the baby girl’s descendants. Without Scranton Roy’s disregard for social barriers, her family of antelope people who populate the story would never have been conceived. As Scranton Roy chases the baby carried away from the tribe’s village, where he killed her grandma, “The farther away the village got, the farther behind he wanted it” (*The Antelope Wife* 5). He moves away from the village and out into the “open” prairie, which he calls “space” (*The Antelope Wife* 5). His act of physically moving “past civilized judgment”

¹⁸⁸ Lulu is an “Other trickster... [figure] in Erdrich’s fiction” (Towery 104).

(*The Antelope Wife* 7) saves the baby. Scranton Roy saved the baby girl by putting “her to his nipple” (*The Antelope Wife* 6) and feeding her with his “appalling, God-given milk” (*The Antelope Wife* 8). His act of social deviance unsettles the perceived social boundaries that establish biologically determined gender roles. In addition, by ignoring social barriers he ensures the survival of an American Indian family and their story.

The notion of survival remains inextricably linked to the notion of death. To survive means to defeat, or to cheat death. Erdrich blurs the distinction between literal death and the invaders’ perception of American Indians. She likens objectification of American Indians, a byproduct of their removal from their tribal context, to death. In *Love Medicine*, her character Nector Kashpaw relates his philosophy of Hollywood’s view of Indians based on his experiences in Hollywood and as a model:

Remember Custer’s saying? The only good Indian is a dead Indian? Well, from my [Nector’s] dealings with whites I would add to that quote: ‘The only interesting Indian is dead, or dying by falling backwards off a horse’. (124)

According to Nector, the dominant social group’s perceptions of American Indians consign them to death because “the invaders are the authors of, and actors in, the process; those they invade are the objects” (Freire 159). The dominant social group in the United States imposes its interpretation of reality onto American Indians, and its reality configures American Indians as lifeless objects. In *Love Medicine*, Erdrich depicts Nector’s value to society as an artist’s “masterpiece” (123) or as an actor in a movie falling “off that horse” because “Death was the extent of Indian acting” (123). Just as the catalogued items discussed in the introduction, Nector, as an American Indian, only obtains value as a lifeless object. The belief that Native Americans exist as “the ‘Vanishing Red Man’” (Bird, “Searching for Evidence of Colonialism at Work” 43) alludes to “the inevitability of ‘death’” (Bird, “Searching for Evidence of Colonialism at Work” 43). Erdrich connects the objectification of Native Americans with death. Nector combats a narrative that, by perceiving him as an object, insists on his death.

Even death fails to act as a barrier to the survival of Erdrich’s characters. In *The Bingo Palace*, Lipsha declares that “You have to stay alive to keep your tradition alive and working” (221). Erdrich contests the imposition of a death narrative onto American Indians and so, as Jeanne Smith claims, “Even death does not contain” (13) Erdrich’s characters. Her characters live, even after death and therefore they survive to continue tribal traditions. In Erdrich’s poem “The Strange People”, death does not act as a barrier to the doe. She “wipe[s] the death scum / from my mouth, sit up laughing / and shriek in my speeding grave”¹⁸⁹. Despite her death, the doe continues to narrate the poem and to act: through action, she combats death and the role of passivity as an *object* to hunt. The dominant social group views death as a barrier to life, but Erdrich’s characters live despite death.

June Kashpaw, a character whom Erdrich depicts as linked to deer, survives death and refuses to allow death to confine her. She reappears after her death on several occasions, and not merely in other peoples’ stories. She first reappears to her son Lipsha in *The Bingo Palace*. June

¹⁸⁹ Louise Erdrich, “The Strange People,” *That’s What She Said*, ed. Rayna Green (Bloomington: Indian UP, 1984) 90.

speaks to Lipsha "as if...[they] are continuing a conversation in time" (54). At the conclusion of the encounter, June gives Lipsha "bingo tickets" (55). June's failure to remain bound by death allows her to help Lipsha. Through the bingo tickets, Lipsha wins the grand prize: a van. Earlier I used Nanapush's claims that "the earth is limitless and so is luck and so were our people once" (*Tracks* 1) as an example of Erdrich's belief that nature and land remain devoid of spatial boundaries, and I explored the link between tribal survival and resisting spatial barriers. Nanapush's statement also depicts luck's connection to tribal survival and by association to resisting spatial boundaries. June transgresses death and brings Lipsha luck. She appears again later in the novel when Lipsha helps his father Gerry Nanapush elude the authorities. He and Gerry "see her silhouette" as "she is driving" (*The Bingo Palace* 256). Gerry gets "into the passenger's side of ...[June's] blue car" (258), and June helps Gerry escape re-imprisonment. June violates the boundary between life and death through her resistance to death's confinement. She reappears to help her son and her former lover escape from U.S. authorities and from imprisonment. Through June's posthumous appearances, Erdrich associates luck, hope, salvation, and survival with the act of collapsing boundaries.

Contesting Identity: Challenging the 'Individual' as Territory in Louise Erdrich's Fiction

One of the primary themes found in Erdrich's fiction is a challenge to the "territorial and possessive terms" (Wayne 23) used to describe "the self" (Wayne 23). She contests the spatial boundaries that define the widely held belief of what constitutes an individual. William Bevis vehemently endorses abandoning the "vocabulary of 'individual'" (22) because "such discourse presumes both the separability and independent value of each category, as if the individual is a meaningful category with or without context" (Bevis 22-3). Erdrich, through her characters, proposes new methods of depicting Native American experiences without using concepts like identity and the individual. New terminology to describe tribal, rather than non-Native, social relations emerges out of Erdrich's narratives. The phrase polymorphic collectivity¹⁹⁰ simultaneously reflects the author's resistance to the separation of self from tribal connections and echoes her vision for change, which is manifested through her characters. This chapter does not advocate abolishing the self, but claims instead that sense of self remains connected to, and cannot be examined in isolation from, other factors.

Like other characters in American Indian fiction, Erdrich's characters resist conforming wholly to the beliefs and values upheld by "[w]estern cultural traditions" (Ruppert, *Mediation in*

¹⁹⁰ A fuller explanation of this phrase and its applicability to Erdrich's novels will emerge later in the chapter through an analysis of her characters and their stories.

Contemporary Native American Fiction 3), which elevate the individual over the collective community found in Erdrich's tribe. Her characters contest the idea of individual identity and the self, even Bevis' transpersonal self¹⁹¹. In *Tracks*, Louise Erdrich depicts the negative effects that the introduction of individual advancement and self-conceptualized identity, has on tribes. The characters in *Tracks* are forced to pay fees for their allotments, but Nanapush, the trickster figure who adopted Fleur and her daughter Lulu, realizes that "the late-payment fine levied by the agent is probably illegal, yet greed and desire divide the Anishinabeg...promoting others—Margaret and Nector—to look out for themselves at the expense of communal values"¹⁹². The characters fail to pay for the entire balance on all of the allotments, and the Kashpaws must privilege their own survival over the survival of the clan.

As discussed in the introduction, Bevis believes that individualism has become a privileged narrative in the United States. Louise Erdrich questions the 'individual' as a privileged narrative, but in her critique of the western definition of an individual she also subverts and reappropriates, through her characters, the notion of the individual within a tribal context. Her novels problematize the western belief that an individual, even a fragmented postmodern individual, assimilates its own definition, and is perceived (perceives itself) in abstraction from, and in isolation to, other factors and influences. Rather than remaining indivisible and inseparable within its own physical boundaries, Erdrich depicts an individual's inseparability and indivisibility from its context, environment, relations, and social and cultural groups. Her vision of individual members of a tribe remains linked to "the first assumption of tribalism...that the individual is completed only in relation to others" (Bevis 20). The author resists attempts to abstract individuals from their contexts, and instead she re-stitches her 'individual' characters to tribal and familial frameworks through their relations, stories, negotiations, and experiences.

Meldan Tanrisal believes that "Native Americans need to formulate new concepts of self, family and continuity. Therefore, at the center of American Indian fiction is the attempt to recover an identity and to illustrate the continuity of native culture"¹⁹³. Rather than attempting to "recover an identity" (Tanrisal 71), Erdrich reconfigures and questions the concept of identity and instead depicts polymorphic collectivity. Polymorphic collectivity, as a descriptive concept, reflects Vine Deloria Jr.'s description of tribalism:

Tribalism looks at life as an undifferentiated whole. Distinctions are not made between social and psychological, educational and historical, political and legal. The tribe is an all-purpose entity which is expected to serve all areas of life. (*Custer Died for Your Sins* 264-65)

¹⁹¹ A concept more fully examined later in the chapter.

¹⁹² Nancy J. Peterson, "History, Postmodernism, and Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*," *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 109.5 (1994): 987.

¹⁹³ Meldan Tanrisal, "Mother and Child Relationships in the Novels of Louise Erdrich," *American Studies International* 35.3 (1997): 71.

The tribe and its tribal members remain inseparable, and there are no distinctions between the individual self and the collective¹⁹⁴. The collective tribe contains members and the members make up the collective; therefore, as conditions, environment, and members fluctuate, so does the collective tribe¹⁹⁵. Erdrich's characters exist through interconnected stories and convoluted relationships to other characters. Like her stories which are "all attached...because they're hooked from one side to the other, mouth to tail" (*Tracks* 46), her "characters are connected in both circular and linear ways" (Towery 100). Their ties to collective stories that reflect tribal oral traditions and their complex relationships to each other, which flow from one novel into another, contribute to the collapse of identity and individual subjectivity.

To illustrate the differences between a worldview that privileges individual identity and a worldview that advocates polymorphic collectivity, I will initially focus on Erdrich's portrayal of three characters that subscribe to the western view of individualism and identity construction. Two characters, Pauline and Lipsha, separate themselves from their tribal context and one character, Karl, whose ethnicity remains uncertain, severs his family ties. Each of these three characters leaves home and family.

Throughout Erdrich's novels, readers piece together stories of Lipsha Morrissey, the son of June Morrissey and Gerry Nanapush but raised by Marie Kashpaw. Although Lipsha perceives himself as an individual, already a reader cannot view Lipsha as an individual without context because he remains tangled in a web of relationships to the characters mentioned above. The collective narrators of *The Bingo Palace* illustrate the ramifications of Lipsha's complex relationships:

The story comes around, pushing at our brains, and soon we are trying to ravel back to the beginning, trying to put families into order and make sense of things. But we start with one person, and soon another and another follows, and still another, until we are lost in the connections. (5)

Like the collective narrators, the readers become "lost in the connections" (5). Erdrich's stories bind individual characters to a tribal framework, which serves to dissolve the distinction between the individual and the collective tribe.

However, Erdrich uses Lipsha's character to depict the problems that stem from attempts to construct an individual identity outside of a tribal context. Throughout *Love Medicine*, Lipsha struggles with questions of self and identity. Everyone, except for Lipsha, seems to know the secret of

¹⁹⁴ Although some ethnic writers sympathize with Anzaldúa's need to "disengage from my family" (*Borderlands / La Frontera* 887) and community, this need stems from a belief that all "Culture is made by those in power—men" (*Borderlands / La Frontera* 888). Most American Indian writers would insist that their cultures emerge from a different tradition that do not reflect the dominant social group's patriarchal hierarchy. For example, Paula Gunn Allen insists that "Traditional tribal lifestyles are more often gynocratic than not, and they are never patriarchal" (*The Sacred Hoop* 2). Anzaldúa's concerns about patriarchal communities differ from Native American traditions and experiences. Gloria Anzaldúa, "Borderlands / La Frontera," *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1998) 887-902.

¹⁹⁵ Catherine Rainwater refers to Erdrich's novels as a "paper 'tribe' [that]...reinscrib[es] the audience with new rules for constructing self and world" (*Dreams of Fiery Stars* xii). Like Erdrich's and Deloria's vision of tribalism, her novels remain inseparable from the larger "paper 'tribe'" (*Dreams of Fiery Stars* xii) that includes all of her novels, and my analysis of her characters will therefore incorporate stories from all of her novels.

his birth and even after his Grandma Lulu tells him who his parents are, Erdrich never fully reveals or resolves the circumstances surrounding his birth and later abandonment. He eventually decides to "[leave] the reservation" and embarks "on a mock-American hero journey to find his identity" (Smith 21). His journey parallels plots of "a considerable number of American 'classics'" which "tell of leaving home to find one's fate farther and farther away" (Bevis 16), but "By now we know that any attempt at forging an identity cut off from the community is doomed" (Smith 21). Lipsha's quest for identity away from the reservation and through essentialist biological characteristics fails.

His 'identity' crisis stems from the stories concerning the circumstances of his birth and abandonment. Lipsha's perceptions of his mother and himself remain tied to a story about her supposed attempt to drown him. In *Love Medicine*, he states that "They had to rescue me out of her grip" (39); however, Erdrich never ultimately confirms or denies this story. Lipsha relates the story surrounding his abandonment. In *Love Medicine*, he claims "my blood mother wanted to tie a rock around my neck and throw me in the slough" (335). While Zelda, in *The Bingo Palace*, confirms this story and Lipsha has a vision about his encounter with the water monster when he "was placed onto...[his] first cradle of water" (217), in *Love Medicine* his Grandma Lulu questions the validity of the story when she states that "That's what you always been told" (335), and in *The Bingo Palace* Lipsha chooses to believe the version of the story that "Grandma Kashpaw told" him about his mother "who was beautiful but too wild to have raised a boy on her own" (52). However, Marie Kashpaw herself reveals that "he was found in the slough, half drowned" (27). By actively deciding to leave the story unresolved, Erdrich denies Lipsha an identity founded on notions of abandonment or individualism.

Erdrich further unsettles Lipsha's quest for identity based on essential biologically inherited characteristics. In *Love Medicine*, once he discovers that June and Gerry are his parents, Lipsha tries to construct his identity on inheritable traits. He claims to "have some powers which, now that I think of it, was likely come down from Old Man Pillager. And then there is the newfound fact of insight I inherited from Lulu, as well as the familiar teachings of Grandma Kashpaw on visioning" (341). Erdrich problematizes these claims through Lipsha and questions the relevance of identity, or self-conceptualization, for tribal members.

Lipsha, in *Love Medicine*, attempts to use these powers on his adopted grandpa Nector; however, his attempts at practicing love medicine result in Nector's death (250), and later in *The Bingo Palace* his healing "touch has deserted" him (66). Meldan Tanrisal's claim that Lipsha is "[t]he medicine man for his generation" (77) also comes into question when, after Grandma Kashpaw gives Lipsha Nector's ceremonial pipe while it's in his possession, he fails to stop the desecration of the pipe as the "eagle feather...finally touched the floor" (*The Bingo Palace* 35). Not only does Erdrich question his powers from Old Man Pillager, but she also questions his self-conception of his insight and visioning. Catherine Rainwater questions Lipsha's power of insight:

This tendency to avoid 'reading' the pictures before him and, instead, to see what he wants to see is largely responsible for Lipsha's fate. Though he claims a Pillager heritage, he seems to lack definitive Pillager traits, especially the ability to alter his apparent fate by straightforwardly recognizing the 'traps'...that lie in his path. (*Dreams of Fiery Stars* 29).

The above quotation reveals not only his inability to use the powers of his ancestors, but also discloses why. Identity emerges out of an *individual's* concept of self. Lipsha exhibits the characteristics of a western individual rather than collective tribal (non-essential, but learned) characteristics. He relies on his own perceptions and on "what he wants to see" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* 29) rather than relying on the larger tribal framework and other stories. Failing to read "the pictures before him" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* 29) allows Lipsha to reconfigure reality to suit himself: the individual. Due to his failures to learn his ancestors' powers because of his self-preoccupation and his quest for self outside of a tribal framework, the author denies Lipsha identity based on inheritable characteristics.

Erdrich, through Lipsha's devotion to self and to the individual rather than to the collective tribe, reveals the link between self-identity, the construction of spatial boundaries, and objectification. In *The Bingo Palace* his girlfriend Shawnee, "is not my sweet Shawnee, not my tender airbrush picture. Suddenly she shows the undertone, the strokes of which she is created. Her hair flows like snakes, shaking down" (*The Bingo Palace* 188). Lipsha only perceives Shawnee in relation to himself, but fails to understand her despite his claims that he "know[s] her" (167). He fails to incorporate her stories with his perception of her, and therefore his perception of her, in isolation from other factors, objectifies her. Erdrich, rather than allowing Lipsha to use his "objectifying 'gaze'"¹⁹⁶, disrupts his construction of Shawnee. Erdrich's depiction of Shawnee's connection to Medusa's snake-like hair and her ability to cause Lyman to stand arrested "in paralyzed surprise like he was frozen" (*The Bingo Palace* 188) alludes to and challenge Sigmund Freud's construction of female sexual identity based on "the castration complex"¹⁹⁷. Shawnee speaks past conventional boundaries and resists Lipsha's construction of her. Erdrich and Shawnee resist the "objectifying 'gaze'" (Bordo 1113); however Lipsha due to his self-involvement, maintains his construction of Shawnee. When she acts outside the boundaries he has constructed for her, he is forced to "try to recast the whole scene in my thoughts" (*The Bingo Palace* 190). He constructs reality and Shawnee "to see what *he* wants to see [emphasis added]" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* 29). Lipsha lacks insight and remains trapped as an individual searching for his identity. His *self*-involvement depicts the links between a narrative individualism, identity, spatial boundaries, American Indians' removal from their tribal context, and their subsequent objectification.

The critic Tanrisal believes that, "[h]aving found out who his true parents are, the alienated Lipsha not only gains his sense of identity, but also his sense of belonging within family and community" (76-7). There appears to be a certain truth in the claim that he achieves connection with the family and community; however, by the beginning of *The Bingo Palace* Lulu has to use Gerry Nanapush's picture as a "summons home" for her "stray grandson" (3). Lipsha has severed his connections to home and family again. I say again, because at the end of *Love Medicine*, Lipsha appears to ritually "bring her [June] home" (367) and fulfill his roll as "[t]he medicine man for his

¹⁹⁶ Susan Bordo, "'Material Girl': The Effacements of Postmodern Culture," *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers inc., 1998) 1113.

¹⁹⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1963) 202.

generation" (Tanrisal 77), but he himself fails to stay home. His links to community and family appear severed despite the fact that in *Love Medicine* Gerry, his father, reaffirms his connection to Lipsha when he claims that Lipsha is "a Nanapush man" (366), and in *The Bingo Palace* his great-grandmother Fleur accepts him as a Pillager because "There's none of us left" (133). While his family accepts him, he continually divorces himself from the tribal framework by relying on his concept of self, and he continually strives to find an identity. He discusses the "younger Indian guys" in *The Bingo Palace* who seem to remain unaware of "the eyes that turn on them, or don't—and I know because I'm usually attempting to be one of them—these guys strut like prairie grouse" (43). Lipsha views himself as one of the "younger Indian guys" (43) and constructs an identity surrounding his notion of a particular category. He then attempts to incorporate the characteristics that he views as inherent to that state of being. His search for identity fails and he needs reassurance when Shawnee tells him to "Get real", and he is forced to "say... words so desperate that...[his] knees buckle" (187): "I am real" (187). His obsession with individual identity "is largely responsible for Lipsha's fate" (Rainwater 29).

The author's characters Pauline and Karl also depict the problems with constructing self-identity, which necessitates removal from family or the collective tribal framework. Tanrisal compares Fleur's connectedness to Pauline's self-imposed removal from the tribal framework:

Fleur maintains the Pillager clan and her sense of community even though she lives in the woods. Pauline wants to live in the white man's town and refuses to speak her native language, refuses to bead, or to do quillwork, or to tan hides. Before Pauline leaves her father warns her 'You won't be an Indian once you return'.
(74)

Pauline, like Lipsha, chooses to move away from the reservation. She breaks away from her own tribal context. In *Tracks*, she reveals her desire "to be like...[her] mother, who showed her half-white. I wanted to be like my grandfather, pure Canadian....I saw through the eyes of the world outside of us" (14). Pauline removes herself from the tribe by denying her Indian blood. Later she constructs her identity as Sister Leopolda by completing her severance from her family: "I was not one speck of Indian but wholly white" (137). Pauline privileges the individual state, which remains devoid of context, over the collective tribe, and Erdrich uses her separation from a tribal context to illustrate the link between the western tradition of individual identity construction and the emergence of colonial dominance. Pauline takes the place of the colonizer, devoid of experience, and attempting to appropriate 'other' experiences. Although Pauline chooses her own fate as an individual without context, she envies other characters' relationships with each other. In *Tracks*, she orchestrates a love scene between Eli Kashpaw and Sophie and she "physically appropriates Sophie's body to enjoy the effects of a love potion on Eli Kashpaw" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* 21). She colonizes Sophie's body in an attempt to experience a sexual act through appropriation. Despite her determination to sever herself from tribal relationships, she remains envious of Fleur's "clan, the new made up of bits of the old" (*Tracks* 70) and she has to try "to stop...[her]self from remembering what it was like to have companions" (15). Pauline depicts the isolation that results from individual constructions of identity. Her self-imposed absence from the collective tribe, and her efforts to forget her "family", in her own words, "had hardened my face" (20). Pauline remains one of the most problematic characters in Erdrich's fiction. One critic attributes this to her role as "representing all

the pain, rage, and frustration of a person forced to live in two different cultures while being rejected to a large degree by both"¹⁹⁸. She purposefully severs her own connections to her family and tribe, but is also rejected by the community in Argus.

Karl Adare, a character of undetermined ethnicity in Erdrich's novel *The Beet Queen*, is abandoned by his mother, like Lipsha. In addition, like Lipsha, he chooses to leave family:

Karl leaves Wallace...Karl also leaves Mary, Celestine, and Dot. He fulfills the American ideal of leaving home but fails to find success and self-realization. Karl's character remains the same as in the beginning—empty, bitter, unreliable, alienated: 'I give nothing, take nothing, mean nothing, hold nothing'. (Walsh and Braley 8)

Karl adopts the same ideal of individualism and identity to which Lipsha falls victim. Karl, as a character in Erdrich's novel, contributes to one of the main themes in *The Beet Queen*. He epitomizes, and contributes to, the problems associated with "the breakdown of conventional family structures"¹⁹⁹ in the novel. While other characters in this particular novel re-stitch new and unconventional relationships that "are formed to replace traditional ones" (Flavin 17), Karl remains alone and individual. Karl's last appearance in Erdrich's novel further links him to the ideals of individuality and identity devoid of context. When his daughter Dot flies away from Argus on a plane "Only Karl's face was thrown back in wonder" (*The Beet Queen* 327). The other characters have formed connections through their links to Dot, but Karl remains enthralled by the "American ideal...[of] self-realization" (Walsh and Braley 8).

Erdrich also uses pictures to unsettle the notion of identity. Her characters Beverly (Hat) Lamartine and Wallace Pfef construct their identities using pictures of other people. In *Love Medicine*, Beverly Lamartine uses a picture of Henry Jr., who may or may not be his son with Lulu, to help sell his product. Erdrich reveals that "Part of Bev's pitch...was to show the wife or husband a wallet-sized school photo of his son. That was Henry Junior" (110). Soon however, this sales pitch became more real to Bev, and "Some days, after many hours of stories, the son became so real in Bev's mind that when he came home...he half expected the boy to pounce on him before he put his key in the door" (111). Bev begins to construct an identity for his son as well as a self-concept of himself as a father. He returns to the reservation with the hopes of easing his "ache" and bringing Henry Jr. to the city as his son (112); however, his "fantasy" (112), his construction of fatherhood based upon a picture, collapses upon his arrival at the reservation. When he arrives at Lulu's he is unable to tell which of Lulu's boys is Henry Jr.:

Each of them was Henry Junior in a different daydream, at a different age, and so alike were their flat expressions he couldn't even pick out the one whose picture sold the record number of home workbooks in the Upper Midwestern Regional Division. (113).

Beverly's self-concept of his fatherhood based on Henry Jr.'s picture cannot withstand the reality of Henry Jr.'s relationships and connections to his brothers. Bev quickly realizes that "Lulu's boys had

¹⁹⁸ Sinder Larson, "The Fragmentation of a Tribal People in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 17.2 (1993): 10.

¹⁹⁹ Louise Flavin, "Gender Construction Amid Family Dissolution in Louise Erdrich's *The Beet Queen*," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 7.2 (Summer 1995): 18.

grown into a kind of pack" and "Clearly they were one soul" (118). He remains unable to abstract Henry Jr. from his family and tribal connections, and his notions of an identity based on fatherhood crumbles. Beverly also attempts to abstract Lulu's connection to Henry Junior. Bev "habitually blotted away her face and body, so that in his thoughts she was a doll of flour sacking" (112). The importance that he places on his *self*-concept of fatherhood causes him to ignore other factors. Despite his wife's dislike of children he even "convinced himself that his wife would take to Henry Junior" (112). He sees Henry Jr. and Lulu only in relation to his own *individual* needs.

In a similar way, Wallace Pfef, a character in *The Beet Queen*, constructs a story of his life around a picture of his "poor dead sweetheart" (159). Erdrich soon reveals that the sweetheart never existed. Pfef claims not to "know the woman in the picture" (159), but he uses her to construct a heterosexual identity for himself. This picture allows him freedom, and he has "never had to marry" (159) because of his supposed lost love. Like Beverly's *self*-concept of fatherhood, Pfef's *self*-construction of a gendered identity collapses when he engages in a sexual liaison with Karl Adare.

Erdrich illustrates, through her characters, that privileging the concept of an individual identity remains counter-cultural to the tribal and collective ethos found in her novels. Through the experiences of Lipsha, Pauline, Karl, Bev, and Pfef, she collapses the western concepts of identity and individualism. Jeanne Smith argues that "Erdrich closes *Love Medicine* with the paradoxical idea that identity depends on blurring the boundaries between self and other. Isolated and self-contained, the individual has no meaning" (23). I would like to modify this statement. If one accepts the belief that the individual is a prerequisite to determining identity, as identity and notions of the self remain interchangeable concepts, Erdrich's novels collapse identity by dissolving the boundaries between a concept of self, which remains based on self perception, and other(s)' stories of that person. Erdrich destroys identity and the individual subject by deliberately leaving the differences between a character's self perceptions and other characters' perceptions and stories of that character unresolved; therefore, her readers and characters must synthesize all of the endless stories, and self-perception then collapses in the convoluted connections to family and other stories.

Like Lipsha's view of his own powers, many of the characters' self-perceptions are contradicted by, and incorporated into, other characters' stories. Nanapush, in *Tracks*, teaches Eli Kashpaw how "to make love standing up" (48) and alludes to his ability to please his three wives (45), but Margaret Kashpaw contradicts Nanapush's supposed virility when she likens his genitalia to "two wrinkled berries and a twig" (48). Later in the novel, Margaret again claims that "Nanapush has lost the use of every other stick, except his cane" (126). Nanapush begins to incorporate Margaret's concept of his virility into his story, and he worries that he may be "ruined for it, after all" (129). Nanapush's concept of his own virility becomes inseparable from other stories and perceptions. His adopted daughter Lulu's self-perception also differs from others' view of her. Erdrich uses Lulu's assertion that she "is a woman of detachable parts" (115), to show that Lulu remains inseparable from other peoples' concepts and stories of her. In *Love Medicine*, Lulu claims that "No one ever understood...[her] crazy and secret ways" (276) as a prelude to telling the audience her story her way, but the audience's perceptions of Lulu remain linked to an unknown narrator's confidence that for "most of her life Lulu had been known as a flirt....Tongues less kind had more indicting things to say"

(108-09). Erdrich's characters, because they and their stories remain inseparable from collective and tribal stories, resist the western constructs of identity and individualism.

June, a character in many of Erdrich's novels also defies western constructions of identity and individuality. June mostly emerges posthumously through other people's stories. In the six books, there are two chapters dedicated to June, but someone other than June narrates them both in the third person. Like *Love Medicine*, and arguably like the connections of her six books to each other, June "is built layer upon layer...completing the whole by connecting the pieces" (Tanrissal 69). June exists as a ghost and as people's memories, and therefore she remains connected to other characters' stories and becomes a part of the collective tribe. After the first chapter of *Love Medicine* when June dies in a snowstorm, Erdrich's readers begin to piece June's stories together. Narrators divulge that "June was raised by Great-uncle Eli...June's no-good Morrissey father ran off...June decided on...Gordie Kashpaw, and married him even though they had to run away" (*Love Medicine* 8), she had "long slim legs" (17), "Once he'd [Eli] bought June a plastic dish of bright bath-oil beads" which "she had put...in her mouth" (215), and later in *The Bingo Palace* the narrator discloses the sexual abuse that caused June to want "*Nobody ever...[to] hold me again*" (60). Although June is dead throughout most of her stories in all of Erdrich's novels, June exists in other characters' stories. Erdrich withholds a first person narration of June's self-perception from the narratives and constructs June through collected and collective stories. Erdrich uses this unconventional character development to collapse identity as a privileged method of explaining an individual's *true* self. June exists in other characters' collective memories.

Louise Erdrich, an Indian American author, illustrates the conflicts of identity between the dominant social group's privileged individual and Native American tribal members. John Slack supports this argument through his summary of other critics' analyses of *Love Medicine*. Many literary critics claim that because of "the book's lack of either a central protagonist or a central conflict" it "is really not a novel but rather a collection of short stories bound together loosely by a common set of characters"²⁰⁰. The narrative structure of *Love Medicine* and her novel's relationships to each other reflect tribal values of collectivism rather than western values of individuality. Erdrich's narratives challenge the conventional novel by removing the privileged individual protagonist and, in this manner, she weds form and function: her stories and characters collectively inhabit the books. Through her characters, she collapses identity and the superiority of individualism. By linking her characters to each other in a "complicated house" and an intricate "web" (*The Beet Queen* 176) of relationships, to animals, and by creating problematic characters that privilege individualism and attempt to create identity based on inheritable traits, Erdrich not only deconstructs identity and individualism, but she also offers polymorphic collectivity as an alternative.

²⁰⁰ John S. Slack, "The Comic Savior: The Dominance of the Trickster in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*," *North Dakota Quarterly* 61.3 (1993): 118.

Healing through Beading, Stitching, and Knitting: Re-Connecting Erdrich's Stories to the Oral Tradition through Gossip, Names, Ancestors, and Polymorphic Collectivity

The ties of American Indian fiction to oral traditions are more than mere literary devices. These ties allow authors to achieve a particular vision. They first collapse the spatial boundaries and barriers upheld by "[w]estern cultural traditions" (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3), and then the authors re-stitch their stories to a tribal framework, which allows them to re-imag(in)e social relations within a tribal context and ensure tribal survival by continuing a living tradition. In her newest novel, *The Antelope Wife*, early in the story Erdrich depicts the implications that cultural invasion had, and continues to have, on American Indian tribes. Scranton Roy, a soldier "in the U.S. Calvary at Fort Sibley" (*The Antelope Wife* 4), invades a tribal village with his regiment. When he kills an "old woman" (4)²⁰¹, he hears "a word she uttered in her language. Daashkikaa. Daashkikaa" (4). Later in the novel, Cally hears the word "Daashkikaa. Daashkikaa, I keep thinking" (212). One of her twin grandmas defines the word for Cally. It means "'Cracked apart,' she says, looking at me strangely. 'How do you know that old name'" (213). The introduction of western culture to Native America "Cracked apart" (213) the tribes and removed tribal members from their tribal framework. Erdrich uses her stories to heal her "Cracked apart" (213) characters by re-stitching them into a tribal framework through storytelling.

Sewing, knitting, and beading are powerful images throughout Erdrich's novels. She uses them as analogies for tribal healing and tribal survival. Erdrich ends the novel with an address to her audience:

All that followed, all that happened, all is as I have told. Did these occurrences have a paradigm in the settlement of the old scores and pains and betrayals that went back in time? Or are we working out the minor details of a strictly random pattern? Who is beading us? Who is setting flower upon flower and cut-glass vine? Who are you and who am I, the beader or the bit of colored glass sewn onto the fabric of this earth? (*The Antelope Wife* 240)

She initiates this address by claiming that she "told" (240), rather than wrote the story; therefore, she connects the story to an oral storytelling tradition. She then links life, earth, and the characters that exist on earth to the act of sewing. Beading and sewing provide an analogy for life. She beads, or re-stitches, her characters into the pattern of oral storytelling and into a tribal framework; consequently, she gives life to her characters. Erdrich also depicts family ties as threads, which acts as another sewing analogy. She claims that "Everything is all knotted up in a tangle. Pull one string of this family and the whole web will tremble" (239). Her characters remain intimately entwined and connected to each other. Their existence, tribal survival, depends on them being beaded, or re-stitched, into a new tribal pattern. A dog narrator from *The Antelope Wife*, *Almost Soup*, describes the women's' purposes for beading:

We dogs know what the women are really doing when they are beading. They are sewing us all into a pattern, into life beneath

²⁰¹ Erdrich later reveals that all of the twin characters in the novel are her descendants.

their hands. We are the beads on the waxed string, pricked up by their sharp needles. We are the tiny pieces of the huge design that they are making—the soul of the world. (83)

Sewing, stitching, string, and beads are all part of the pattern of “life” (83) that shapes the world. By re-stitching her characters “into a pattern” (83) of a tribal framework, Erdrich re-patterns their social relations and therefore re-shapes the world: reality. Sewing, in the above quotation, also takes on generative qualities. Erdrich links sewing, or stitching, to creation.

Images of re-stitching, beading, sewing, and knitting take on life-giving properties in Erdrich’s fiction because they occur in relationship to mothers or traditional men like Eli Kashpaw. Erdrich uses imagery of yarn or string to depict an umbilical cord, which is indicative of tribal survival. The collective narrator in *The Bingo Palace* claims that “The red rope between the mother and her baby is the hope of our nation. It pulls, it sings, it snags, it feeds and holds” (6). She again links sewing, knitting, and beading images with life-giving qualities. Different characters knit, sew, bead through out her novels. In *Love Medicine*, Albertine comments on Dot’s knitting:

One of Dot’s most peculiar feats was transforming that gentle task into something perverse. She knit viciously, jerking the yarn around her thumb until the tip whitened, pulling each stitch so tightly that the little garments she finished stood up by themselves like miniature suits of mail. (199)

Marie Kashpaw also sews. She “sewed a long rip. A longer seam” (*Love Medicine* 93). Zelda, Marie Kashpaw’s daughter, “sewed everything too tight, pulled her thread until it broke, became impatient with the way her work turned out before she halfway finished” (*The Bingo Palace* 210), the twins bead in *The Antelope Wife*, Shawnee and Lyman “have the use of a needle and thread in common” (*The Bingo Palace* 159), and June “remembered her uncle Eli’s hands pulling and dropping the slender designs” (*The Bingo Palace* 210). An overwhelming number of the characters that sew are mothers: Dot, Zelda, Shawnee, the twins, and Marie whom one critic claims “is the ‘super mother’” in *Love Medicine* (Tanrisal 72). In *The Antelope Wife*, through the birth of “this lovely child and her sister...my [Rozin’s] boundaries stretched” (39). Erdrich uses physical imagery of motherhood, the stretched stomach, to illustrate the significance of collapsing boundaries. Mother and child are simultaneously one and many for nine months: a collective image that mirrors tribal relations. Boundaries between people collapse through their social and familial relations, motherhood, and tribal connections.

Some of Erdrich’s male character’s also sew. She depicts the two men that sew as good fathers. Even Lipsha, a rival for Lyman’s girlfriend Shawnee’s affection, claims that Lyman has “clearly...kept a firm connection with his little boy” (*The Bingo Palace* 21), and “June was raised by Great-uncle Eli” (*Love Medicine* 8). Erdrich infuses sewing, beading, and knitting with life-giving qualities by linking them to images of nourishment and survival. Her characters “are scattered like beads off a necklace and put back together in new patterns, new strings” (*The Antelope Wife* 220). Through images of sewing, beading, and knitting, she outlines her new vision of kinship ties that replace the disintegrated old traditional family ties, and she re-stitches her characters into a dynamic and changing tribal framework. She achieves this by linking her stories to traditional tribal oral stories through gossip, naming, ancestors, and polymorphic collectivity.

Erdrich implements gossip as one of her storytelling techniques. Gossip also provides a forum for Erdrich to collapse spatial boundaries that categorize her novels as literary narratives. Catherine Rainwater delineates the differences between conventional literature and American Indian oral traditions. In conventional western Literature, "a large measure of power remains with the author", but the oral traditions of American Indians "are communal, stories are not the intellectual property of an 'author.' Traditional literature, by definition, disallows such power-driven 'authorship'" (*Dreams of Fiery Stars* 6). Erdrich combats this view through gossip. The critic Annette Van Dyke discusses Erdrich's narrative technique "in *Tracks* and in *Love Medicine*,...[Erdrich] tells the story through multiple voices...as if the reader is listening to gossip [emphasis added]"²⁰². Gossip allows Erdrich to contest the belief that stories can be owned by an individual, a concept that has already been unsettled in the previous section.

Gossip, through its changeable and dynamic nature, also contests the belief in pure truth. Aurelia, a character in *Love Medicine*, warns Albertine not to "trust nothing you don't see with your own eyes" (13). The significance of this exchange is manifold. Erdrich uses Aurelia to warn her readers that stories shape our reality, and reality is merely a composite of different versions of stories. In addition, this particular exchange contains a note of irony because readers can read, and therefore see, Erdrich's stories, but cannot trust them. The reliability of different characters' stories remains part of a process of continual revaluation and revision, and the veracity of the stories therefore remains constantly in question.

Gossip emphasizes the communal sharing, rather than the individual ownership, of stories, and links Erdrich's fiction to a tribal framework by employing storytelling techniques. Her characters' stories mirror gossip as they shift and alter with each telling. Erdrich addresses the characteristics of gossip in *Tracks*:

Not two days and that story was on every tongue. Once out, as if repetition equaled truth, it strengthened until the inventions were known as fact, until it came back reshaped and enlarged by a hundred pairs of lips. (215)

The events surrounding Napoleon's death become communally known and shared. Although no one witnesses his murder, the gossip surrounding the events "equaled truth" and the speculation becomes "fact" (215). None of the gossip actually reflects the actual circumstances of Napoleon's death as Pauline's devil, but the only versions of the story are the ones "reshaped and enlarged" through gossip (215). Gossip alters and embellishes stories, and it denies individual ownership of events or stories.

Erdrich's characters often relate the same story but with often-contradictory variations, which again emulate the characteristics of gossip. Although Lulu narrates a story about her husband Henry Lamartine's death as if it is true, she later narrates the same story with contradictory variations. She relates the events surrounding Henry's death:

Henry, died one winter on a dangerous train crossing. I always knew they should have put some automatic bars up out there. He stalled in the middle of a soybean fields, or maybe the train did not blow its warning whistle." (*Love Medicine* 278)

²⁰² Annette Van Dyke, "Questions of the Spirit: Bloodlines in Louise Erdrich's Chippewa Landscape," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 4.1 (1992): 15.

In this version of the story, Lulu offers two possible reasons for her husband's death. Both possibilities attribute Henry's death to an accident. The "train crossing" was "dangerous and he either "stalled" or the train failed to "blow its warning whistle" (*Love Medicine* 278). Later, however, she reveals that she knew Lyman was lying about the events surrounding Henry Junior's death and she links the events surrounding Henry Junior's suicide to Henry Senior's death:

There was a false note in his voice...I also knew that no accident would have taken Henry Junior's life, not after he had the fortune to get through a war and a prison camp alive. But like the time they came to tell me the news of Henry Senior, I said nothing, I knew what people needed to believe." (*Love Medicine* 288)

She seems to acknowledge that her husband's death, like Henry Junior's death, was a suicide; however, when she initially relates the story she appears to truly believe that his death was an accident. She never explicitly acknowledges that she has related two differing versions of the same story. In true storytelling style, Erdrich's characters alter the stories with each telling.

Sometimes two or more of Erdrich's characters offer different versions of the same story. In *The Bingo Palace*, Lipsha describes the differences between his two grandmas, Grandma Kashpaw and Lulu. He claims that "Grandma Lulu isn't neat like her [Marie Kashpaw], and at her place everything is strewn out" (*The Bingo Palace* 128). This observation about Lulu's cleanliness directly contradicts Beverly 'Hat' Lamartine's observations about Lulu in *Love Medicine*. He claims that "Even with eight boys her house was neat as a pin" (*Love Medicine* 114). Can readers resolve the two differing views offered by Lipsha and Hat? No. These stories constitute the readers' only information about Lulu's cleanliness. This appears to be a mundane example, but it verifies Lulu's claims that she is "a woman of detachable parts" (*Love Medicine* 115). Readers, like Nector, remain unable to "get a bead on her" because "She never stops moving long enough for me to see her all in a piece" (*Love Medicine* 62). Like Lulu, Erdrich's stories have "detachable parts" (*Love Medicine* 115) that resist, through the incorporation of storytelling techniques, what Catherine Rainwater terms "western literary analysis" (*Dreams of Fiery Stars* 8) because they keep "moving" and shifting (*Love Medicine* 62).

Another variation that emerges throughout all of her six novels concerns the traditional Chippewa "road of the dead" (*The Bingo Palace* 54). In *The Bingo Palace*, Lipsha claims that June "has walked the three-day road back, the road of the dead" (54). Nanapush, in *Tracks*, also "wished each spirit a good journey on the three-day road, the old-time road" (3). In an interesting divergence from the other two incidents, in *The Beet Queen* Russell begins to walk down "the road that the old-time Chippewas talked about, the four-day road, the road of death [emphasis added]" (300). Are these differing labels for the Chippewa "road of death" (*The Beet Queen* 300) a product of the novels literary production, and therefore merely a typo; or is Erdrich purposefully altering the story; or is she making a statement concerning the different exposure of her narrators to their tribal traditions? In the latter case Lipsha should have been the one to make the mistake due to his history of mistakes and humorous attempts at experimenting with Chippewa traditions. Conversely, Russell lives with Eli Kashpaw and Fleur (*The Beet Queen* 298), two of the "old-time Chippewas" (*The Beet Queen* 300), and probably has more exposure to tribal stories. The only concrete conclusion that emerges out of these variations is that they illustrate that Erdrich's story "comes up different every time, and has no ending, no beginning....They only know they don't know anything" (*Tracks* 31). Erdrich's uses her

constantly shifting and gossip-like narrative style to re-stitch her narratives to traditional methods of storytelling.

She also re-stitches her narratives to a tribal framework by using gossip in another manner. One particular incident in *Love Medicine* depicts a different function of gossip: its protective qualities. Marie Kashpaw counters gossip with gossip. Her "goods...collected in town" (*Love Medicine* 93), her knowledge of local gossip, prevents "Old Lady Blue" and "old, fat LaRue" from "get[ting] a wedge in" (93). She combats their malicious intentions to inform her about her husband's, Nector's, activities with gossip that she has gathered. She "didn't like to be the one to remind these old cows of their own bad lives. But...[she] had to protect...[her] plans" (93). She uses gossip as a protective device against malicious gossip²⁰³. In this instance, Erdrich uses gossip in the same manner that Vine Deloria Jr. claims American Indians use teasing. He points out that, "For centuries before the white invasion, teasing was a method of control of social situations by Indian people" (*Custer Died for Your Sins* 147). Marie's application of gossip as a means of controlling a "social [situation]" (*Custer Died for Your Sins* 147) illustrates gossip's further significance in Erdrich's tribal framework.

Her stories' gossip-like qualities have far reaching ramifications. They not only unsettle ownership of stories within her own texts, but they also make literary critics' attempts at, what Rainwater terms, "definitive interpretation" (*Dreams of Fiery Stars* 7) problematic. By constantly offering readers differing and alternative versions of, and new information about, the same stories from novel to novel, Erdrich attempts to make her books inaccessible to western criticism. Silberman attempts to make the conclusive claim that "In *Love Medicine*...after the appearance of the unfortunate Andy right at the start the whites are all but invisible" (113). Readers later learn in her novel *Tales of Burning Love*, a novel connected to *Love Medicine* through shared characters and stories, that Andy is not white. June, before her death, was heading back to "his mother's home reservation" (*Tales of Burning Love* 5). Assumptions based on her previous novels, or even stories that emerge prior to other stories in a given novel, collapse through other versions of the same story²⁰⁴. Through gossip, Erdrich's stories, like Rainwater's discussion of "Native American traditional literature," tend to "[resist] most types of western literary analysis" (*Dreams of Fiery Stars* 8) and are re-stitched into a tribal framework.

²⁰³ Tayo's grandma, in *Ceremony*, uses gossip in a similar manner. She combated the stories that other people told about her family with gossip:

'I know a better one than that about her! That woman shouldn't dare be talking about us. What about the time they found her rolling around in the weeds with that deaf man from Encinal? What about that? Everyone remembers it!' She pounded her cane on the floor in triumph. The story was all that counted. If she had a better one about them, then it didn't matter what they said. (*Ceremony* 89)

Gossip protects Tayo's grandma from malicious gossip. Her ability to utilize gossip for her own purposes keeps her feelings from becoming "twisted, tangled roots" (*Ceremony* 69). Again, through common theme we see the links between books by Native American authors.

²⁰⁴ This chapter attempts to acknowledge some of the contradictions and variations in her stories that resist analysis; however, I realize that my own criticism of her novels remains dependent on her stories, and any new stories that she may write.

An example used earlier in this chapter illustrates the importance of re-stitching stories into a tribal framework to ensure tribal survival. After Nector Kashpaw's experiences in Hollywood and as a model he realizes "that the greater world was only interested in...[his] doom" and so he "went home" (*Love Medicine* 124). By going home, back to the reservation, Nector combats the figurative death caused by his objectification by reconnecting himself to his tribal context. Erdrich links her characters to a tribal framework through transformations and stories. Rather than depicting individuals as isolated, Erdrich incorporates them into tribal tales and makes them part of a larger framework. Within the tribal framework, her characters resist containment in their bodies as physical barriers. The characters remain connected to a collective tribe and family. Lissa Schneider suggests "that the means by which Erdrich's characters learn to internalize and integrate past with present is through the transformative power of storytelling"²⁰⁵. Her characters, and arguably American Indian people, do not exist except in stories. Identity is really a story constructed about the self. She "repeatedly shows how storytelling—characters sharing their troubles or their 'stories' with one another—becomes a spiritual act, a means of achieving transformation ...[and] forgiveness" (Schneider 1). Not only do stories heal her characters, but they also affirm the incorporation of her characters into the collective stories and the tribe. Her characters, and arguably by extension American Indians, and their stories remain inseparable from each other and both enter the tribal framework through their ties to tribal oral traditions. Without stories and tribal members, the tribe would cease to exist, and vice versa. Schneider discusses a scene in *Love Medicine* when Zelda, Aurelia, and Grandma Kashpaw relate a story concerning June to Albertine. She asserts that "when the three older women, in a communal effort, tell the tale to Albertine, we see for the first time the healing properties of storytelling", and "It is after these shared stories, moreover, that Zelda, Albertine's mother, affirms her daughter's membership in the community" (Schneider 6). The story connects the women to each other and then to the tribe.

Erdrich also combines literary and storytelling techniques to create an image of polymorphic collectivity, a phrase that accurately describes the author's vision for healing American Indian relationships and experiences within a tribal context, as a survival mechanism and to combat a narrative of death. As discussed earlier, this narrative separates Native Americans from their tribal framework by assigning them value as lifeless objects and as individuals. William Bevis, in his article "Native American Novels: Homing In", discusses a concept he uses to describe Native American identity that he terms the "transpersonal self" (22), which is "composed of society, past, and place conferred identity, and defined 'being'" (22). While he dismisses the term individual because "such a discourse presumes both the separability and the independent value of each category" (22), he chooses not to question the term identity. His term "transpersonal self" (22) succeeds in re-contextualizing the abstracted and alienated individual, but he fails to explore fully the detrimental effects that the concepts of identity and self have on Native American communities. The two concepts perpetuate objectification, illustrated in the episode between Shawnee and Lipsha, and colonization, depicted in Pauline's interaction with Sophie and Eli. In addition, Erdrich envisions more than identity and self

²⁰⁵ Lissa Schneider, "Love Medicine: A Metaphor for Forgiveness," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 4.1 (1992): 2.

which are “composed of society, past, and place conferred identity” (Bevis 22). While society, past, and place remain crucial components of her novels, she also illustrates the importance of tribal stories and the inseparability of her characters from stories and human relationships. As both concepts, individualism *and* identity, “[presume] both the separability and independent value” (Bevis 22) of the self, Erdrich collapses both notions through her characters who only exist as part of collective tribal stories, as part of their oral traditions, and as polymorphs that can transform into animals.

Erdrich's newest novel, *The Antelope Wife*, depicts the power of storytelling through twins. Erdrich uses multiple twins in her new novel to relate a new tribal story to her readers. Catherine Rainwater discusses the importance of twins to Native American traditions:

Twins, usually pairs of male warriors, are important figures throughout traditional Native American tribal literature as well as within the contemporary written literature that so heavily draws upon traditional stories. (*Dreams of Fiery Stars* 145)

Not only do the written narratives draw “heavily...upon traditional stories” (145), but I believe that contemporary American Indian authors' texts are continuations of, and new additions to, traditional stories. Although twins are usually “male warriors” (145), Erdrich alters the story by writing about female sets of twins. This alteration is within keeping of the polymorphic and mutable nature of traditional stories.

The Antelope Wife opens with a story that initially seems separate from the rest of the narrative:

Ever since the beginning these twins are sewing. One sews with light and one with dark....One twin uses an awl made of an otter's sharpened penis bone, the other uses that of a bear. They sew with a single sinew thread, in, out, fast and furious, each trying to set one more bead into the pattern than her sister, each trying to upset the balance of the world. (1).

This story resonates on many levels with images and techniques found in traditional tribal stories. Although this is a creation story, the narrator places the story in the present tense like other oral tales. The story remains immediate and endless. M. Jane Young discusses this aspect of American Indian myths in her article “‘Pity the Indians of Outer Space’: Native American Views of the Space Program”:

Although they [Native Americans] may introduce a myth as having occurred ‘a long time ago’ or ‘in the beginning,’ they do not envision the events of the myth as over and done with, situated at a single point in a linear flow of time; instead, they perceive them as ever-present, informing the here and now. (278)

She opens the story with a recognized traditional storytelling formula, which immediately positions her story in a mythic framework. By employing this method of writing, her story becomes part of the “ever-present” (Young 278) and ever changing oral tradition.

The twins also signify the story's traditional resonance. Erdrich then seems to move out of a mythic framework into a historical context as she relates the story of Blue Prairie Woman and Scranton Roy; however, her readers soon learn that her story continues the mythic and tribal tale because “Supposedly this Blue Prairie Woman, before she disappeared, had twins who had twins. Zosie. Mary. They were the first set of twins and the second too” (*The Antelope Wife* 35). Later, in the story the last Zosie and Mary twins took “either end of a long piece of thread and began to sew

with it, adding to their own peculiar pattern" (206-7). The characters in *The Antelope Wife* are the stories and the stories are the characters: they are collective and interchangeable and polymorphic. Like the twins, Erdrich's stories are a new generation of stories that emerge from previous generations. She not only incorporates traditional material, but her stories and characters are a continuation of tribal stories and part of a collective whole: a new generation.

Twins provide an insight into Erdrich's vision for tribal relations based on polymorphic collectivity. In *The Antelope Wife*, Rozin's mothers are "twin mothers" and "she doesn't know which one of them is actually her blood mother....But she also was a twin, at first anyway, and so she is not confused that her mother comes as a set" (84). Her mothers, Zosie and Mary, appear so similar that Augustus Roy, the grandson of Scranton Roy, "had fallen in love with the enigma of his wife's duplication" (209). Their similarities caused a "confusion of sameness" (209), and after he began an affair with Mary, his wife's sister, he had to look for differences and then actively create physical differences by biting or burning one twin because "there was barely anything one did differently from the other" (210). Later, however, Cally itemizes her Grandmothers' differences: she notes that "Mincemeat pie gives Zosie the runs. Pumpkin stops Mary's bowels" (194). Erdrich plays with the characteristics of identical twins. They exist in separate bodies and remain different, yet they are also inseparable and similar. Cally speaks of her dead twin sister Deanna:

My other childhood mind and body. Still, I've absorbed the shape of Deanna's shoulder blade wings underneath my scratching hands and every expression on her face, and sometimes I run on her slender calves or mistake the shapes of the nails I am painting for her nails that I so often painted red. (199)

Here Erdrich blurs the physical boundaries between Cally and Deanna through her description of the twins as sharing the same body. The twins remain inseparable from each other even after death. Cally occasionally polymorphically adopts the physical attributes of her sister. Erdrich contests Jeanne Smith's assertion that "bodies become boundaries, outer layers which limit and define individuals" (14). The barriers of their physical bodies fail to contain the twins. Erdrich uses them as one of many tools to collapse the impenetrability of physical bodies as self-containing barriers. In the authors' fiction, she collapses spatial barriers through her illustration that physical boundaries, like the body, fail to confine her characters. Twins are collective from their conception, and Erdrich uses them to problematize the notion of self and identity and to portray the characteristics of polymorphic collectivity.

The twins, along with other characters throughout her novels also exhibit characteristics of polymorphic collectivity through their ties to animals. Some characters demonstrate polymorphic capabilities that allow them to transform into animals, which already exist as part of themselves. In Louise Erdrich's poem "The Strange People", she quotes Pretty Shield's discussion about the characteristics of antelopes, which are the animals that Erdrich's characters in *The Antelope Wife* are associated with:

The antelope are strange people...they are beautiful to look at, and yet they are tricky. We do not trust them. They appear and disappear; they are like shadows on the plains. Because of their great beauty, young men sometimes follow the antelope and are lost forever. (89-90)

Shield conflates antelope and people in her description. Erdrich's poem follows this pattern and conflates a doe and a woman into one person. She dissolves the physical boundaries through polymorphism, and "All night I am the doe" (90), who in the morning "sit[s] in his house / drinking coffee till dawn" (90). The woman and the doe inhabit one another and Erdrich's narrator makes no clear distinction between the two. Simultaneously they are one and many. Erdrich's character Sweetheart Calico from *The Antelope Wife*, one of the antelope wives, communicates to Klaus non-verbally, that "The antelope are the only creatures swift enough to catch the distance... *We live there*" (32). She initially describes the antelope in the third person, but then she incorporates herself into the group of antelope through the collective pronoun we. Rozin, Cally and Deanna's mother, also exhibits antelope-like characteristics when "she broke into a trot" (175). The animals that appear in the characters are inseparable from the characters; therefore, the characters are collective entities in themselves and within the larger tribal context as well.

In *The Antelope Wife*, which appears to remain separate from the author's other novels, Erdrich suddenly introduces a link to the Pillager family. A Shawano, part of the family linked to antelopes, "stopped with a Pillager woman. He was lost" (35), and later one of the Grandma twins "growled, baring her strong white teeth" (56). Erdrich links her novels together through family ties and polymorphic transformations. She uses the imagery of bears and wolves to link the characters in *The Antelope Wife* to the Pillagers, characters from Erdrich's other novels, who are part of the bear clan. Fleur Pillager, a character in several of Erdrich's novels "is human; yet at times, she is wolf, water-monster and bear...she...disorders the boundaries between human and animal" (Clarke 28). As another of Erdrich's polymorphs, Fleur depicts the self as not singular and isolated, but as multiple and collective. Her descendants are also linked to various animals. In *Love Medicine*, Fleur's adopted mother and Marie Kashpaw's mother-in-law "Rushes Bear...ate as though she'd hibernated all winter" (72) and "raked at...hair with claws for a comb" (73); Moses Pillager, Fleur's cousin, "walked with a cat's care" (*Love Medicine* 75); Fleur's daughter Lulu, in *Love Medicine* "winked...with her bold, gleaming blackberry eyes" (116) and has a "wolf smile, the Pillager grin" (318-19); her sons "had grown into a kind of pack" (118); June, Lipsha's mother, is often linked to a deer, and in *The Beet Queen* Eli tells Mary "That's June" as she looks at "an old pencil drawing of a deer" (201) and while he means that she drew the deer, it adds deeper significance to an event that occurs in *Love Medicine* when Gordie kills a deer and mistakes it for June; Dot, Celestine's daughter "growled" (*The Beet Queen* 181); Shawn, Dot and Gerry Nanapush's daughter, has the Pillager grin "*Like a wolf pup*" (*Tales of Burning Love* 400); and Gerry Nanapush "[often takes] on the physical attributes of the trickster's most common animal form—a great rabbit"²⁰⁶. Most of Erdrich's characters contain animals as part of themselves and they thus exhibit polymorphic collectivity²⁰⁷.

²⁰⁶ Lydia A. Schultz, "Fragments and Ojibwe Stories: Narrative Strategies in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*," *College Literature* 18.3 (1991): 86.

²⁰⁷ Links to animals, like polymorphic collectivity, also link Erdrich's characters to their tribal framework. Ruppert claims that "the spirits of animals are much closer to the world of the spirit than humans are" ("Mediation and Multiple Narrative in *Love Medicine*" 235). By linking her characters to animals, Erdrich establishes her stories as tribal myths and stories.

Gerry Nanapush, Lulu's son with Moses Pillager, seems to exist as an amalgamation of all of Erdrich's projects and exhibits the characteristics of polymorphic collectivity. He epitomizes his tribe's struggles against spatial confinement through his trickster-like attributes, he represents the collective tribe rather than just *himself*, and he illustrates the methods that Erdrich employs to re-stitch her characters into a tribal framework. Through Gerry, Erdrich blurs the distinctions (boundaries) between her characters and traditional tribal elements; therefore, her characters are simultaneously storytelling techniques and tribal members. By conflating her characters with traditional tribal characters, she incorporates her characters into a tribal framework.

In Erdrich's fiction, Gerry is indicative of more than individual character. Gerry, as one of Erdrich's trickster figures, is simultaneously a narrative tool and a tribal member; however, his significance for his tribe extends farther than that. Ruppert asserts that when Lipsha helps Gerry escape from the authorities "By driving Gerry to freedom" he "delivers Gerry back to the world of myth" ("Mediation and Multiple Narrative in *Love Medicine*," 239). Gerry exhibits characteristics of his mythic role throughout Erdrich's novels. Spatial barriers fail to confine Gerry. He breaks out of jail on multiple occasions because "he had eellike properties in spite of his enormous size" (*Love Medicine* 200), but he fails to elude imprisonment because he believes that "he could walk out of prison and then live like a normal person" (*Love Medicine* 200). Erdrich uses Gerry's character as a larger social commentary. Despite the enormity of the tribe/Gerry, American Indians/Gerry escape detection when they escape from spatial barriers/jail; however, because the tribe/Gerry lives *within* a society largely influenced by "[w]estern cultural traditions" (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3), they never remain free for sustained periods of time. In addition, jail physically removes Gerry from his family and larger tribal context. Gerry "was placed in the control unit. He receives visitors in a room where no touching is allowed" (*Love Medicine* 211). Separated from his tribal connections by spatial barriers, Gerry rapidly deteriorates. When readers next encounter Gerry, his "look...was...hungry and his gaze...razor desperate" (*The Bingo Palace* 25). Gerry becomes a physical manifestation of the imprisonment of American Indians by social and physical barriers.

While in prison, Gerry escapes imprisonment, not only literally, but also figuratively through stories. As he "remembered the stories of Old Man Nanapush" he escapes the confines of his cell:

For two days Gerry's cell breathed to life, walls disappeared, and then the world shrunk back to itself again and his mind hid underneath a black cloth. His mind was deepest sky, dreamless and pure, his thoughts black earth. He smelled dirt and new rain. (*The Bingo Palace* 224)

Through traditional tribal stories, Gerry collapses the walls of his cell, and the stories allow him to return to the "deepest sky" and the "black earth" (*The Bingo Palace* 224). His freedom from spatial boundaries restores him to Nanapush's "limitless" earth (*Tracks* 1). Through this incident, Erdrich again implies that tribal stories contain the power to destroy spatial barriers. In a later novel, *Tales of Burning Love*, Gerry explains the ramifications of his, and therefore American Indians', imprisonment to his daughter Shawn. He tells her that "There are not stories in that place [jail]" (395). By imposing a narrative of space onto Native Americans that remains synonymous with abstraction and separation, "[w]estern cultural traditions" (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3) sever

American Indians from their tribal contexts and healing tribal stories. Erdrich writes new stories and incorporates them into a tribal framework. She follows collective tribal traditions in her stories, and links her stories to “the Chippewa community”, which provides “variant versions of myths and stories” that “have always ‘shifted with the personalities speaking, perhaps with the occasions, and with the localities’” (Clarke 36). Her stories are contemporary versions of tribal myths and stories, and like her characters, who according to Susan Castillo, have “adapt[ed] and transform[ed] what they find useful in contemporary culture” (“The Construction of Gender and Ethnicity” 233), she has incorporated a “world of supermarkets and highways” (Castillo, “The Construction of Gender and Ethnicity” 233) into her stories. Her stories reflect the dynamic nature of Chippewa tribal stories.

Names and naming also play important roles in reconnecting her characters to a tribal context. Gerald Vizenor writes that “Nicknames are personal stories that would, to be sure, trace the individual to tribal communities rather than cause separations by pronouns of singular recognition”²⁰⁸. Through (nick)names, individual tribal members remain inseparable from a tribal collective context. Moses Pillager portrays the tribal tradition that “sacred names are private” (“Native American Indian Identities” 117), because “Moses isn’t his real name” (*Love Medicine* 74). His mother “fool[ed] the spirits by pretending that Moses was already dead” (*Love Medicine* 74-5) and “Nobody ever let out his real name” so “the sickness spared Moses” (*Love Medicine* 75). Erdrich depicts the ceremonial power that names and naming have within a tribal framework through Moses. By renaming him, his mother saves him, but without his name he believes that he is truly dead. Later, Moses tells Lulu “his real name” and she “whispered it, once” so that “he would know he was alive” (*Love Medicine* 82). Moses lives or dies in tandem with his names. In *Tracks* when Pauline separates herself fully from her tribal context to “be the bride...[of] Christ” (204), she changes her name. Pauline becomes “*Leopolda*. I tried out the unfamiliar syllables. They fit. They cracked in my ears like a fist through ice” (205). Her change of name confirms her removal from her tribe, and like ice cracked apart by “a fist” (205) she cracks apart from the collective tribe: she becomes another person.

Like Moses, one of Erdrich’s characters in *The Antelope Wife* must lose one name and gain another to survive. A dog carried Blue Prairie Woman’s baby away from the village on its back: the same baby found by Scranton Roy. She mourned so deeply for “The child lost in the raid” who “was still nameless, still a half spirit” (*The Antelope Wife* 12) that the tribe decided to heal her by giving her a new name. Her “name was covered with blood, burned with fire. Her name was old and exquisite and had belonged to many powerful mothers. Yet the woman who had fit inside of it had walked off” (13) so they gave her a second name. Once the tribe gave her a name that described “the place toward which she traveled, the young mother was able to be in both places at once” (14): she was “called Other Side of the Earth” (15). By renaming her in a ceremony, the tribe helps her recover from her grief. Before she leaves her village to search for her lost child, she bears twins whose carry on both of her names through their traditional names, but their nicknames are Zosie and Mary.

Each subsequent generation of twins, in *The Antelope Wife*, carries on both her names and the first set of twins’ nicknames. The power of her names in combination with the nicknames is so

²⁰⁸ Gerald Vizenor, “Native American Indian Identities: Autoinscriptions and the Culture of Names,” *Native American Perspectives on Literature and History*, ed. Alan R. Velie (London: U of Oklahoma P, 1994) 120.

strong that after Rozin's mothers break with tradition and nickname their children Rozin and Aurora, but keep their sacred names the same, each child that is "called Other Side of the Earth" (15) dies young. Rozin's sister Aurora died. Rozin also breaks with tradition when she mistakenly nicknames her children Deanna and Cally, and Deanna, who is "Other Side of the Earth", also dies young (15). Cally claims that they got their names "From the mouths of animals", but Deanna's "name couldn't save her" (110). Rozin and her mothers' decisions to disrupt the unity between the two names lead to death. Rozin realizes that not naming her girls Zosie and Mary was a "[b]ad choice" (35). She recognizes that she "broke more continuity, and they suffered for it too. Should have kept the protection. Should have kept the names that gave the protection. Should have kept the old ways just as much as I could, and the tradition that guarded us" (35). There are two important issues in the above quotation. Again, Erdrich connects death with lack of continuity. Spatial boundaries also break "more continuity" (35) by separating people from their tribal context. Rozin and her twin mothers, by changing their children's names sever the children's ties to their ancestors and to their tribal framework. Nicknames, according to Vizenor, uphold the continuity of tribal life and reinforce people's ties to a tribal framework. The protection that Rozin mentions stems from the fact that nicknames "trace the individual to tribal communities" ("Native American Indian Identities" 10) and ceremonial names connect individuals to their tribal ancestors: Blue Prairie Woman's names call upon all the other personalities that "fit inside of it" (*The Antelope Wife* 13).

The first Blue Prairie Woman to appear in Erdrich's new novel explains that "spirit names...are like hand-me-downs which have once fit other owners. They still bear the marks and puckers. The shape of other life" (*The Antelope Wife* 217). Names obtain their significance through their links to tribal ancestors. Throughout her novels, names link her characters to their ancestors. Ancestors, to American Indian tribes, "are crucial to the sense of...belonging. They provide the foundation of a psychological and mythological life" (Tanrisal 72). Erdrich emphasizes her characters ties to their ancestors as a means of ensuring their incorporation into a tribal framework. Almost Soup illustrates the power and significance of ancestors. Almost Soup avoids becoming soup "because...[he is] smart, desperate and connected with...[his] ancestors" (*The Antelope Wife* 77). He invokes the knowledge of his ancestors "from deep way back, from the dogs going back to dogs unto the beginning of our association with...humans" and uses his "puppyness" (*The Antelope Wife* 77) to avoid becoming soup. Erdrich, through Almost Soup, acknowledges the importance and significance of the knowledge that ancestors pass down from generation to generation, which remains a crucial aspect of tribal life.

Several of her characters receive traditional names through ceremonies in her novels, which further connects her characters to their ancestors and their tribal framework. Gerald Vizenor claims that "Traditional Native American Indian names are heard in visions and conceived in performances" ("Native American Indian Identities" 117). Her character Albertine receives "in a ceremony...a traditional name, one belonging originally to a woman she had heard of spoken in her grandmother's low voice as a healer" (*The Bingo Palace* 23). Her new name has tribal resonance. She inherits the name of a tribal ancestor named "Four Soul" (*The Bingo Palace* 23) who is a Pillager, and more importantly Fleur's mother. As Albertine researches the "scattered records of the Pillagers" to find information about Four Souls she comes into contact with other tribal members, and "the names

almost hurt with the intimations of unknown personality" (*The Bingo Palace* 23). Erdrich clearly depicts the power of names through Albertine's experiences looking through tribal records. The names still contain the "personality" (*The Bingo Palace* 23) of their members. In her novel *The Antelope Wife*, Erdrich also renames Minneapolis "Gakahbekong. The city" (220). Gakahbekong reflects the tribal associations with the city and the focus of the book on the American Indian community in the city rather than the non-Native community. Her characters "are scattered like beads off a necklace and put back together in new patterns, new strings" (*The Antelope Wife* 220) in the city. Through this narrative twist, Erdrich incorporates urban American Indians into her tribal framework as well as reservation dwellers. By altering the name, she awards the city tribal resonance in her story.

According to the author, the significance of naming for the tribe remains so crucial that she links it to beading, which is an activity that Erdrich attributes with life-giving qualities. Cally's grandma Zosie gambles with the original Blue Prairie Woman/Other Side of the Earth in her "naming dream" (*The Antelope Wife* 217) during the first stages of her pregnancy. She initially gambles her and her children's lives for the blue beads that Blue Prairie Woman's lost daughter wore, and then she gambles the beads for the woman's names. Again, Erdrich depicts the ties between beading and birth/life. Blue Prairie Woman warns Zosie that "The name goes with the beads, you see...because without the name those beads will kill you" (217). The names emerge out of a tribal ceremony and offer tribal protection to the keepers of the names. Women/mothers, "when they are beading" (83) as discussed earlier, "are sewing...life beneath their hands" (83). Through Zosie's traditional naming vision that leads to the twins' names, Erdrich implies that life, for American Indians, without tribal connections and protection leads to death. The names, direct connections to ancestors and tribal communities, protect their keepers from the beads, which *are* life²⁰⁹.

Louise Erdrich collapses spatially configured physical and social boundaries through nature, her character's social relations, incest, deviance, and death. She also destabilizes the notion of identity and the privileging of individuality through her characters and their experiences by re-contextualizing her characters within a tribal framework. By re-stitching her characters into tribal stories through gossip, names, ancestors, and twins, she contests certain "[w]estern cultural traditions" (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3). Her intertextual and interlinked novels contribute to a growing "paper 'tribe'" (*Dreams of Fiery Stars* xii) that, as Paula Gunn Allen claims, "forms a field, or...a hoop dance, and as such is a dynamic, vital whole whose different expressions refer to a tradition that is unified and coherent on its own terms" (*The Sacred Hoop* 4). Erdrich, by incorporating and adapting traditional tribal conventions, reconnects her characters to a tribal framework and creates narratives that represent a new generation of tribal stories.

²⁰⁹ Only when Cally learns that she received Blue Prairie Woman as her "other name", the one that "is a stubborn and eraseless long-lasting name" (217), can she receive the blue beads from "Beneath her [Sweetheart Calico's] tongue" (218). Cally is incorporated into the collective tribe through her name, and only then can she own the beads.

Conclusion: The End of Space as a Narrative of Dominance

This thesis has demonstrated the project of five American Indian authors to offer a new perspective of reality that resists and challenges the United States' narrative of dominance. Although they adopt a western book format, their stories remain inextricably linked to tribal frameworks and oral traditions that undermine aspects of the dominant discourse. Writing within a context still determined by "1. foreign domination, 2. the presence of a political/territorial entity in the colony, and 3. geographical separation from the colonizing power" (Morris 74), they have successfully used their writings to retroactively and proactively reconfigure social relations and negotiations within a tribal framework.

As members of both cultures, Native American authors are able to reveal the differences between an Euroamerican worldview and tribal worldviews. The authors exploit the contrasts to illuminate the underlying assumptions that inform "[w]estern cultural traditions" (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3). Linda Hogan asserts that "Inside the walls / world changes are planned, bosses overthrown" (Hogan, "The New Apartment, Minneapolis 263). Resistance and change occur from within. Within the literary discipline, Hogan and her contemporaries plan and execute protest. Her walls symbolically allude to the spatially configured and confining walls—literal and figurative—erected by a "parochial" (Freire 159) and narrow worldview. Through stories linked to a tribal context, she and other American Indian authors contest walls and spatial barriers and their incompatibility with Native American traditions, stories, and experiences.

Through an analysis of the colonization of Native America by European settlers, the subsequent appropriation and objectification of American Indians and their lifestyle through "cultural invasion" (Freire 159), and the examination of a narrative of space constructed and adopted by dominant discourse in the U.S., this thesis has portrayed the departure from that narrative advocated by Native American authors. The thesis explored the relationship between spatial theory and "[w]estern cultural traditions" (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3) and suggested that space, when perceived as territory, obscures the relationship between things and their human and personal contexts through abstraction. This narrative of separation and abstraction "perpetuates existing power relations" (Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other* 42) and legitimizes domination. The narrative of discourse sanctioned by dominant discourse also defines space as lack and justifies colonization.

Henri Lefebvre examines space and its properties. He accurately illustrates the spatial configuration of social relations as a construct, but he fails to recognize the dangers inherent to his narrative of space. For Lefebvre, his space is a privileged narrative. Those who *acquire* space attain power; those who fail to create space, according to his criteria, lack power. Upon close inspection, Lefebvre's argument contains the tools for its own destabilization. He recognizes the disparity between his 'space' and nature. He claims that "The more a space partakes of nature, the less it enters into the social relations of production" (Lefebvre 83) and that the conventions that characterize space are damaging "nature...by abstraction, by signs and images, by discourse" (Lefebvre 70). His argument illuminates the incompatibility of his narrative of space, based upon "[w]estern cultural traditions" (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3), and nature. Nature "does not produce" (Lefebvre 71), and therefore nature cannot produce space. According to Lefebvre, a society "failing to produce its own space...would fall to the level of folklore" (Lefebvre 53). The links between nature and American Indian tribes, illustrated by their novelists, result in their rejection of space based upon Lefebvre's standards.

The vibrancy and proliferation of a new generation of American Indian stories contradict Lefebvre's claims. Clearly, their cultures have not disappeared. Contemporary Native American narratives, through their ties to a tribal framework collapse western forms of space; therefore, they challenge the dominant social group's values, beliefs, and perceptions of reality. Catherine Rainwater asserts that their texts demonstrate the need for new types of analysis while simultaneously revealing the contradictions found within "the dominant discourse" (*Dreams of Fiery Stars* 34):

Their works also testify to the fact that the dominant discourse is always 'at risk of disruption' by contradictory statements formulated within the strictures of that same discourse. Unfolding within the strictures of Eurocentric written narrative, these texts nevertheless demand non-Eurocentric interpretations based on nonwestern worldviews. Thus the dominant discourse is readily 'counter colonized.' (*Dreams of Fiery Stars* 34)

American Indian authors demonstrate the retroactive and proactive effects of reconfiguring the characteristics of space and offer social relations based upon a tribal context. Linda Hogan, Leslie Marmon Silko, N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, and Louise Erdrich 'counter colonize' western space through their texts. This thesis establishes that Native American authors not only, in Catherine Rainwater's words, "dream of nothing less than revision of contemporary reality" (*Dreams of Fiery Stars* ix), but they actually revise reality. These authors transform reality and illustrate the far-reaching affects that result from their revision of space. By re-stitching their narratives into a tribal framework, they contribute to the continuation of tribal stories.

The authors also re-stitch their characters into a tribal context. This disrupts a privileged narrative of 'individual' identity: a product of spatially configured social relations. As the characters become more involved with tribal traditions and stories, the less they exhibit the characteristics of the alienated individual prevalent in, and created by, western discourse. This move away from Euroamerican definitions of identity and individuality further question western spatial constructions, which create artificial boundaries, that serve to abstract and sever things and people from their

relations and context. As a product of a worldview that constructed spatial theory, the individual exists “without context” (Bevis 23). American Indian narratives remain inseparable from tribal contexts; therefore, the individual does not exist in reality as it is determined by tribal experience. The characters instead participate in tribal relations that unite them with nature, animals, ancestors, and stories. Through connection, they resist abstraction.

Linda Hogan and her contemporaries overwhelmingly depict houses as derelict and rundown buildings. As seen in *Fools Crow*, buildings, houses, ranches, and forts were among the first visible signs of the occupation of Native America. The walls symbolized the increasing presence of Euroamericans. In addition, the construction of the buildings became ominous omens of the settler’s intentions. Buildings reflect the trend, which the settlers had adopted from Europe, of spatially separating themselves from the land. By illustrating the temporal nature of buildings, the five authors examined in this thesis demonstrate that artificial walls—literal and figurative—eventually collapse. The walls not only fall down, but nature eventually overgrows the barriers. The authors depict the vulnerability of spatial boundaries, especially to nature, and the resilience of nature. Through houses, Hogan and her contemporaries reveal the methods that their narratives will employ to unsettle spatial boundaries. They insist that “This land is the house / we have always lived in”²¹⁰. Unlike the settlers who abstract themselves from the land and seek to possess it, the authors make evident the harmony and connection that exists between nature and the tribes.

Linda Hogan’s three novels, *Mean Spirit*, *Solar Storms*, and *Power*, accomplish the project to modify the dominant perception of reality through her tribal imperative and ritual journeys. The landscapes found in her novels remain tribally defined and resist attempts to map them. The inhabitants in Watona, in *Mean Spirit*, refuse to accept the dominant social group’s label for the town and instead re-write over a sign declaring the name of the town as Talbert. Likewise, the settlement of the Hill Indians remains undiscovered by the non-Indian authority figures of *Mean Spirit*. The Hill Indians retain the ability to move the path leading to their settlement. They defy the appropriation of Native America by confounding the attempts to chart their land and by exercising their freedom to define the road to their settlement on their terms. Through the Hill Indians, Hogan exposes the ability of American Indians to work within and around the dominant social group’s perceived authority.

In *Solar Storms* and *Power*, water dominates the landscape. The waterways of the Triangle in *Solar Storms* also remain largely unmapped. The constant changeability of the rivers and marshes challenges attempts to map them. Water is one of the most dynamic and destructive forces found in nature. Dams attempt to control and contain water; however, if there is a chink in the dam the water works at it, widens it, and weakens the structure of the dam. Eventually, the dam collapses and the water escapes its confinement. The characters of *Solar Storms* protest against the government’s decision to build a dam that will flood Native American land, and the water aids their attempts. The characters slip past official blockades to inform others of their cause, and the water refuses to be

²¹⁰ Linda Hogan, “calling myself home” *That’s What She Said: Contemporary Poetry and Fiction by Native American Women*, ed. Rayna Green (Bloomington: Indian UP, 1984) 158.

contained. In *Power*, water floods the land obliterating boundaries and acting as the catalyst for Omishto's rebirth into a tribal context. Through the resistance of nature to artificial boundaries, depicted by water, Hogan's characters learn to escape spatial and social boundaries.

Linda Hogan writes past book covers to offer her narratives as a continuation of tribal stories. Her characters often embark on ritual journeys that result in their reintegration to the tribe. This reconnection only occurs through communal action. Through her narratives' links to a tribal framework, she questions bound perceptions of writing and language by offering an alternative perspective based on tribal wisdom. Her novels contain self-referential moments when she questions the roles of writing and language in her books: her character Horse writes additions to the Bible, he and Moses Graycloud write to the authorities which triggers a federal investigation of the murders in Watona, and Bush writes to protest about the dams. Writing for Hogan is synonymous with resistance. In addition, she depicts the plurality of languages. Her characters, as well as Silko's, most of Welch's and Momaday's, and Louise Erdrich's characters, communicate with nature and the land, which in turn provides them with information that allows them to escape the barriers erected by authority figures. American Indians benefit from their knowledge and understanding of animals and nature. Nature plays a crucial role in their reconnection with tribal frameworks, traditions, and stories by collapsing spatial boundaries and as teachers of survival.

Land dominates the books of N. Scott Momaday and Leslie Marmon Silko. Their protagonists' relationships with nature remain interconnected despite the separation of the protagonists from their tribal frameworks. In fact, the land often reflects the protagonists' sufferings through drought. Only after the characters are reincorporated, through stories, into a tribal context do the land and characters achieve balance and healing. They must reject the dominant narrative of land as abstract from humans and learn to recognize that "the land and the People are the same" (Allen, "The Psychological Landscape of *Ceremony*" 7). Land symbolically adopts female and human form in the two authors' novels. Most of their American Indian female characters often take part in the ceremonies that heal the male protagonists. The authors blur the boundaries between human and land in their novels, further unsettling the dominant narrative of abstraction and separation. In *Almanac of the Dead* and *House Made of Dawn*, the crucial connection between land and human remains mostly hidden. Consequently, few characters achieve reconnection with tribal traditions and stories. In the authors' remaining narratives, their characters attain tribal wisdom through animals and ancestors who act as teachers and guides. By shifting the focus away from a western to a tribal worldview through land, ancestors, and animals, Momaday and Silko offer an innovative perspective of reality. They write past the spatial narrative of artificial barriers and walls through tribal connections demonstrated by inter- and intratextual links.

James Welch's narratives contest spatial boundaries by offering a continuum of stories: each building on the other. Like his contemporaries, he rejects individualism for tribal connections and depicts the damaging effects that a discourse of dominance has had on the tribes. Through his novels, he offers a spectrum of learning. They resist attempts to encode them with Euroamerican signs through their links to a larger story. He attempts to provide readers with stories that continue to relate

Blackfoot history after the invasion of Native America. Through his characters' tribal connections or lack of connections, he shows the necessity of tribal kinship ties in the fight against alienation and for reintegration. As an important component to binding tribal members together, shared stories play a crucial role in James Welch's novels. The characters that have access to tribal stories fare better than Jim Loney whose access to stories is damaged when his mother abandons him. Welch's most notable achievement is perhaps his ability to meld traditional material with contemporary themes. With the exception of *Fools Crow*, his novels occur in contemporary times. He succeeds in moving "the [tribal] community into the future keeping the traditional values alive" (Gable 39). The characters in his novels who learn to incorporate tribal history into their narrative see past boundaries while those that fail to learn the history succumb. Through the incorporation of Blackfoot myth and traditional characters, Welch blurs the boundaries, products of linear time, that separate past from present and future. In addition, he creates stories that combat Native America's history of colonization and heal through connection to tribal contexts.

Like those of Welch, Louise Erdrich's stories offer tribal connections through a continuum. Her novels remain linked through complicated kinship bonds, common characters, shared stories, and learned family traits. She combats the disintegration of tribal relations by offering her stories as a written continuation of her tribe's oral tradition. Like her contemporaries, her novels incorporate elements and characters from her tribal oral tradition: blurring boundaries between past and present and fiction and reality. Her characters also believe or learn that "the earth is limitless" (Erdrich, *Tracks* 1), and she equates the weakening of tribal relations with the introduction of spatial boundaries. By resisting and destroying the spatial boundaries, she re-stitches her stories to a tribal framework. Tribal survival remains linked to the disruption of physical and spatial boundaries. She unsettles the physical boundaries through nature and animals and the social boundaries through incest and deviance. The continuation of Nanapush's family and the family's powers depends upon incest. Deviance also ensures survival and continuance. Scranton Roy's deviant act of breast feeding a baby in *The Antelope Wife* also ensures the continuation of an American Indian family and allows for the narration of their story.

Her resistance to the dominant discourse of space culminates in her radical writing style. She experiments with different methods of writing, and her novel *Love Medicine* in particular, with its lack of an individual protagonist, reflects tribal values of collectivism. Like many of her contemporaries, she seeks to unite form with function. Just as the narratives themselves are collective, so are her characters. Their convoluted kinship ties merely illustrate one form of connection. She links her characters together through sewing and beading, which leads to healing. Through her writing, she sews her characters into a tribal framework. The threads that bind her families and stories together resist analysis based upon Euroamerican theory. In addition, her stories often adopt the form of gossip, which remains changeable and dynamic rather than fixed and static. Erdrich often repeats the same story, but with several variations. Through gossip and variation, she links her stories to a rich tribal tradition of oral storytelling.

She also implements polymorphic collectivity as a strategy to link her stories to a tribal framework. Her characters often assume animal form. Their ability to transform from human into various animals collapses the boundaries between them and nature. A character exists collectively in himself or herself: reflecting tribal collectivity rather than individuality. Erdrich uses twins to illustrate a similar principle. *The Antelope Wife*, is dominated by sets of twins. The twin characters blur the perception that bodies act as barriers. Her twins share bodies and are collective from birth.

Although the five authors' stories are stitched together through a common project of resistance, each author implements unique techniques to accomplish their goals. Overwhelmingly, their attempts to provide a tribal context for their readers have extensive effects on reality. Through their fiction, they offer readers an alternative narrative that reflects tribal values. Their stories, as written continuations of tribal oral traditions, retro- and pro-actively shape and alter perceptions of reality: specifically perceptions of space. The American Indian authors discussed in this thesis reconfigure and re-imag(in)e social relations within a tribal framework, which serves to provide context through stories that combat the abstraction and objectification that result from a spatially constructed boundaries. This thesis has moved away from theory based analysis and has provided a further inquiry into the manner in which Native American writings depart from western theories and methods. It has demonstrated how American Indian authors reappropriate their traditions and stories by re-stitching their writings to tribal frameworks. Their narratives combat the effects of cultural invasion and instead "[encode] ethnic signs and nonwestern worldviews" (Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars* xiv). They reject the dominant narrative of space and provide tribal context through their stories' connections to tribal experience. Through resistance from "Inside the walls / world changes are planned, bosses overthrown" (Hogan, "The New Apartment, Minneapolis" 263). Linda Hogan, Leslie Marmon Silko, N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, and Louise Erdrich create a new generation of tribal stories, based on traditional stories, to provide future generations of American Indians with their tribal histories from a nonwestern perspective. Their narratives contest the dominant social group's attempts to perpetuate its discourse of dominance through education. The stories provide tribal contexts that bind tribal members together through shared stories and equip a new generation with tools to ensure tribal survival.

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**Linda Hogan's Tribal Imperative: Collapsing Space through
'Living' Tribal Traditions and Nature**

This land is the house / we have always lived in.

--Linda Hogan, "calling myself home" in *That's What She Said: Contemporary Poetry and Fiction by Native American Women*

James Ruppert describes Native American writing as an act of "mediation" (8), and he argues that "it is more useful to see them [Native American writers] not as between two cultures (a romantic and victimist perspective) but as participants in two rich cultural traditions" (3). This act of mediation allows Native American authors to expose their readers to values and beliefs that differ from the dominant society's worldview. This article will examine the way in which Linda Hogan re-imag(in)es¹ and "[revises] contemporary reality" in her novels *Mean Spirit*, *Power*, and *Solar Storms* by collapsing spatial boundaries through tribal traditions and their links to nature. Gerald Vizenor claims that "narrow teleologies...have reduced tribal literatures to an 'objective' collection of consumable cultural artifacts" ("A Postmodern Introduction" 5-6). He calls for 'other'² types of criticism, and in response to this appeal, I will attempt to illustrate that the perception of reality as "spatially and temporally extended" (Flew 332) remains a western concern. In this article, I will illustrate how Linda Hogan collapses society's spatially configured and abstract reality through tribal traditions and nature.

Paulo Freire, in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, explains the reasons behind, and the ramifications of, society's static perception of reality in his discussion of "cultural invasion" (159). Cultural invasion involves the invaders "penetrat[ing] the cultural context of another group" and imposing "their own view of the world upon those they invade" (Freire 159). He qualifies the effects of the invasion on the invaded in terms of the damage done to the invaded peoples' cultural and creative expression, and he analyzes the underpinning attitudes that shape the invaders' worldview. He argues that cultural invasion "serves the end of the conquest and the preservation of oppression" (Freire 159). Societies that practice cultural invasion use it as a means to exert power³ over the invaded people. He argues that cultural invasion "always involves a parochial view of reality, a static perception of the world, and the imposition of one world view on an 'other'." It implies the:

‘superiority’ of the invader and the ‘inferiority’ of those who are invaded” (Freire 159). The invaders’ rigid perspective of reality legitimates their domination over the invaded people due to the failure of the invader to acknowledge the validity of ‘other’ perspectives.

Freire’s model accurately describes the cultural invasion that Native Americans experience under the oppressive rule of the western world and its narrow worldview, which leads to the subjugation of Native Americans through a rigid and hierarchical classification system that privileges one view over an ‘other’ view. Native American authors use their works as a platform to express a worldview that differs from their invaders’ worldview⁴. Linda Hogan’s fictional works reconfigure and re-imag(in)e “spatially extended” reality (Flew 332). She challenges the underlying premise behind the dominant culture of oppression and domination by writing ‘other’ stories.

The concept of space emerges out of a climate informed by a “static perception of the world” (Freire 159) that has continued to influence the colonizers of North America. As a product of the western worldview, space, a category that simultaneously perpetuates and justifies a rigid worldview, has developed into a tool that dominant society uses to implement “cultural invasion” (Freire 159). It exists within the context of a specific theoretical debate; however, over time western society has forgotten the limited applicability of the term, and it has become “lost in scientific abstractions and mired in a logic of identity... ‘unaware of the real element from which forces, their qualities and their relations derive’ and is blind to ‘the far more subtle and subterranean differential mechanisms’ that constitutes reality” (Best and Kellner 81). Space is an abstract concept constructed to explain the western world’s perception of reality; however, it has ‘spaced’ itself outside of its origins and severed itself from its context. Like science, it has divorced itself from the tradition that gave birth to it, and now it creates the illusion that it occupies a position outside of its roots in theory. In this manner, the notions of theory and space appear to remain free from any cultural bias. When theorists discuss space, it achieves the status of immortality. They theorize about its properties, what the term encompasses, how to claim it, how social relations are negotiated in space, and as a function of time, but they never question its existence.

Theory⁵, and by extension space, has lost “sight of its own conditional nature, takes no risk in speculation, and circulates as a form of administrative inquisition,” and in this way space, as a product of theory, “oppresses” because “it wills or perpetuates existing power relations” and “it presents itself as a means to exert authority” (Minh-ha 42). It acts as a divisive and exclusionary tool used to dominate and claim, and the danger rests in the concept’s apparent immunity from analysis of its own conditional existence. Far from representing Native Americans’ experiences, the concept of space owes its existence to the “shared...common experiences of their [European] peoples...[who] dwelt within the world view which had dominated western Europe for over a millenium” (Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins* 11). Space emerges out of, and serves to legitimate, a specific worldview. The dominant culture effectively uses the notion of space to perpetuate and condone the Euroamerican destructive inclination to divide and conquer. Indeed, I would argue that space has become synonymous with the unknown and the conquerable.

According to Vine Deloria Jr., “*White culture* destroys other culture because of its abstractness”, and as products of “*White culture*” (Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins* 188) theory and space abstract Native American experiences from their tribal contexts. Spatial analysis adopts the

characteristics with which western theory has imbued space; by creating artificial barriers to delineate an area of study, spatial analysis *abstracts* and isolates the objects of study from their context. The western construct space, because it abstracts and *is* an abstraction that has concealed its roots in theory, resists rigorous questioning. Space has concealed its own origin (Lefebvre 71). It has become an integral part of defining Ourselves, Our reality, and Our⁶ position in society through “the illusion of transparency...a transcendental illusion...by...referring back immediately to other traps—traps which are its alibis, its masks” (Lefebvre 29). Space masks its origins in western theory and presents itself as reality.

The suppositions behind space emerge from a tradition that relies on dualistic thinking, which sets up a dichotomy between empty and occupied space, and a desire for structure that manifests itself in the binary opposites through which western society defines itself: nature/culture, female/male, good/evil. The postmodern project to “[denaturalize] constructs like ‘object’ or ‘self’ or ‘history’” (Ermarth 163) succeeds in deconstructing the binaries that Structuralists rely on; however, although postmodernism succeeds in a “collapse of the dualisms that have served modernist hegemony and its forms of transcendence” (Ermarth 7), and questions “Western discourse” and “its obsession with power and knowledge” (Ermarth 6) that has led to the invention of the “conventions of space and time” (Ermarth 22), postmodernism fails to reach the conclusion that space, as a concept and a term, itself remains a construct. Just as Jacques Derrida argues against a transcendental meaning and “erases the radical difference between signifier and signified” (85) but leaves the sign intact, postmodernism seeks to deconstruct the rigid and structural makeup of modernist space but leaves the concept of space intact. Although “It now appears that we have constructed society, The Market, and The System and are solely responsible for them” (Ermarth 164), postmodernism still views space (except for a modernist perspective of space) as a non-manmade invention: as reality.

The very premise of the term ‘space’ relies on certain presuppositions that stem from dominant society’s worldview, which privileges “scientific or abstract...knowledge” over the “simplicity and mystery” of “wisdom” (Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins* 11)⁷. Theory, as a discipline, has positioned itself as the science of Literature; therefore, one can apply Trinh T. Minh-ha’s criticism of science and its anthropologists to the notion of theory, and by extension to the notion of space. The dangers of anthropology exist within the belief that the professional erases his biases and own cultural discourses to provide an unbiased view of an ‘other’ culture predicated on scientific knowledge (Minh-ha 48). The notions of theory and space rely on a similar methodology of abstraction that allows them to write over ‘other’ experience. Just as Trinh T. Minh-ha’s cultural ‘other’ (Minh-ha, 52) represents lack and justifies cultural superiority, space too is used as a tool to assert domination over an apparent lack.

The exemption of space from analysis, whether space reflects a rigid modernist perspective or a fluid postmodernist perspective, allows dominant society to use space, which originates from a hegemonic power structure, as an oppressive tool. Both postmodern and modern definitions configure space as lack. Debates concerning the characteristics of space as rigid or fluid become inconsequential when one views it as synonymous with lack. Lack implies a void: emptiness. The belief that Woman symbolizes lack allows for “the repression” (Cixous 311) and the silencing of women; likewise, the view that space signifies lack allows for the oppression of Native America

through a discourse of dominance and ownership. Daniel Cornell states that lack is “the negation of what is” (52). Lack, because it negates, leads to acquisition. Space has become something to occupy and acquire.

“Western cultural traditions” (Ruppert, *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3) use the category ‘space’ to control and define ‘other’ social relations through a rationalization of occupying lack. Henri Lefebvre⁸ argues that “Any ‘social existence’ aspiring or claiming to be ‘real’, but failing to produce its own space... would fall to the level of folklore and sooner or later disappear altogether, thereby immediately losing its identity, its denomination and its feeble degree of reality” (53). His perspective, stemming from a western worldview⁹, relegates Native Americans’ experiences and social relations to folklore because Native Americans locate their social relations within a tribal context that resists spatial definition. Stated in another way, Lefebvre’s, and society’s, belief that social relations occur in space and are defined spatially limits his perception of reality; therefore, Lefebvre’s and the western world’s spatial boundaries restrict their ability to understand ‘other’ realities. His bound and rigid view of social relations legitimizes the western world’s domination over, and appropriation of, Native American experiences through the rationalization that they fail to produce space. Space has become an abstract territory to own and to legitimate ownership, to dominate and to legitimate domination, and to occupy and to legitimate occupation.

Recently, a race for space has permeated academia. Departments and disciplines within academia vie for space to “measure off and stake out...territory” (Salvaggio 263). Theoretical divisions such as “bodyspace” masculine space, feminine space, and third space” have emerged out of a *belief* that “social relations...are constructed and negotiated spatially” (Duncan 4) and that ownership of these spaces results in knowledge and by extension power. Dominant theories of space argue about masculine and feminized space versus female space or ethnic space. The theorists try to posit, from the privileged position that theory holds within academia, ways of ‘knowing’ the space(s) that we inhabit. Already these theories fail to recognize that they are constrained by a set of assumptions based on a scientific way of ‘knowing’¹⁰. Academia itself consists of separate departments that attempt to cordon off a particular subject by studying it in exclusion from other disciplines, and oftentimes without acknowledging its narrow approach and constraints. Space has become an abstract territory to own, dominate, and occupy. The dominant social group and its institutions are products of the same worldview responsible for constructing space and society; therefore, dominant “social relations” and institutions are spatially perceived and configured from their conception. Alternatively, Hogan’s written works illustrate Native American social relations, which, due to their tribal ties to nature, evade spatial configuration.

Lefebvre argues that “The more a space partakes of nature, the less it enters into the social relations of production” (83). The more American Indians’ social relations participate with nature within a tribal context, the less spatial theory applies to their experiences. Because Native Americans’ social relations occur within a tribal context, western theories concerning space fail to explain their experiences. Henri Lefebvre, in his book *The Production of Space*, depicts a troubled relationship between space and nature. He claims that “It is becoming impossible to escape the notion that nature is being murdered...by abstraction, by signs and images, by discourse” (Lefebvre 71). The very conventions that characterize dominant society and its construct space are rendering nature and its

laws obsolete to the western world. William Bevis postulates that "Native American nature is urban....meaning at the center of action and power, in complex and unpredictable and various relationships" (Bevis 31). Their tribal customs and beliefs focus on nature. Conversely, 'urban' to the western world refers to spatially constructed cities, while nature refers to the opposite of. Their "parochial view of reality" (Freire 159) has influenced their perception of their relationship to nature: "Europeans have long assumed a serious split between man and nature" (Bevis 31). This split informs the western world's view of nature as wilderness. For American Indian authors, "Nature is part of tribe" (Bevis 31); therefore, their stories and their tribal relations preserve their links to nature and reject spatial analysis.

Mean Spirit focuses on a community of Indians living in an Oklahoma town called Watona, Talbert to the non-Native inhabitants and the official institutions, during the oil boom on Indian Territory. The novel, by following the Graycloud family's plight, deals with the inhabitants' struggle to survive social greed and values that clash with their own traditional values and beliefs. Likewise, *Solar Storms* tracks the events surrounding four generations of the females in Angel Wing's family and their struggles against social institutions, which are indicative of a larger social order, attempts to create artificial boundaries; in this case, dams. Hogan's newest novel, *Power*, follows a full-blood Taiga adolescent, named Omishto, as she experiences rebirth through storm, wind, story, and balance. Hogan uses these stories as a forum to re-imag(in)e Native American social relations.

In *Solar Storms*, Hogan portrays the Triangle's defiance of society's attempts to use maps to spatially chart and label an area in an attempt to understand and measure space. She states that "Maps are only masks over the face of God" (138) and that "maps were not reliable" (122). Maps mimic the lens that shapes society's view of, and belief in, spatial relationships. Maps contain artificial boundaries, divisions, measurements, and labels that seek to bind the dynamic relationships found in nature. Similarly, social conventions, predicated on an understanding of spatially constructed barriers, seek to bind a dynamic and 'living' Native American culture. Western society's worldview attempts to define social relations spatially and to impose a static and rigid worldview over dynamic human relationships that emerge out of a tribal, and therefore a natural, context. Likewise, "the cartographers thought if they mapped it, everything would remain the same" but "the land refused to be shaped by the makers of maps" (123) much like many Native Americans refuse to be shaped and defined by society's spatial boundaries. Nature's "wildness, its stubborn passion to remain outside their [the dominant culture's] sense of order made them want it even more" (123). A desire to control nature is doomed to fail. Angel's Auntie comments on society's ignorance of nature: "Did you know that the men building these dams didn't even know that water ran north" (275). Society's ignorance hinders its attempts to spatially control nature while tribal knowledge of nature allows Native Americans to see past society's physical and social barriers.

Peggy Ackerberg, in her article "Breaking Boundaries: Writing Past Gender, Genre, and Genocide in Linda Hogan," claims that "Hogan weaves her boundary-breaking imperative throughout her poetry, fiction, essays, and interviews" (9). Hogan's "boundary-breaking imperative" (Ackerberg 9) remains inseparable from her preoccupation with nature. She utilizes nature's disregard for society's artificial boundaries as a means of collapsing space. She sets *Solar Storms* in a region "known as the Triangle" that "had long been in dispute between Canada, the United States, and tribal

nations" (*Solar Storms* 66) and "where water was broken apart by land, land split open by water so that the maps showed places both bound and, if you knew the way in, boundless" (*Solar Storms* 21). The Triangle and its waterways remain undefined, unclaimed, and unconfined by countries or maps. Omishto also comments on nature's lack of boundaries: "There are no edges, no borders between the elements because everything is water, silver and glassy. The whole ground moves and shimmers as if it is alive" (*Power* 46). Hogan illustrates nature's ability not only to deconstruct society's spatial boundaries through its fluidity, but also to completely erase the boundaries. Due to their links to nature, tribal relations mirror nature's disregard for boundaries and resist the boundaries that spatial analysis imposes on them. Angel Wing embarks on a journey of discovery that causes her to state that her "vision shifted" (*Solar Storms* 85) in this uncharted, at least inaccurately charted, and undefined territory. By accepting the tribal way of viewing nature and by extension Native American social relations, boundaries previously impenetrable to Angel become "doorway[s] into the mythical world" (*Dwellings* 19).

Hogan's novels seek to demonstrate that, although western society remains bound by its inability to look past the spatial barriers that it has erected, tribal relations remain free from containment and unbound because of tribal ties to nature. One character in *Solar Storms* declares "that earth has more than one dimension. The one we see is only the first layer" (123). By searching for 'other' (natural) ways of knowing, not just relying on sight, and by rejecting her preconceived notions predicated on the western way of knowing, Angel learns to see beneath the surface, and "one day my vision shifted and I could even see the fish on the bottom" (85). Angel's experiences, within the fold of her extended family and in the improperly charted waterways of the Triangle, cause her to reject society's worldview and to accept a worldview based on tribal wisdom and nature's laws. The author depicts the tension between society's propensity to abstract, a product of society's worldview, and her belief in experience through a realtor in *Power*: "He sees subdivisions. I see life" (198). These books remove the spatial boundaries that seek to subdivide "life" (198). Hogan argues that communication with nature leads to a more holistic understanding of Native American tribal relations.

Society informs and remains influenced by the dominant perspective of space, but tries to position itself outside any such influences. In other words, society tries to exist separately from the very attitudes and perspectives that have shaped and built it into what it is. A striking example of this attitude emerges through analyzing the notion of a house. In the United States, arguably as an extension of its links to Europe, a house becomes a haven and sterile oasis in many modern societies amid the dangerous and filthy wilderness: "houses 'ought to be' web-free" (Hogan, "Heart" 113). Vine Deloria Jr. encapsulates a difference between Native American culture and dominant American culture in a few sentences. He believes that "[i]nherent in the very definition of 'wilderness' is contained the gulf between understandings of the two cultures. Indians do not see the natural world as a wilderness" (Deloria, "Trouble in High Places" 281). Hogan uses these conflicting views to further her argument for a more empirical, rather than abstract, view of nature and tribal relations. An example of this tension exists in the idea that houses reflect the Euro-American tradition of separating and dividing space. A house attempts to provide spatial boundaries by creating walls that try to contain space and to keep the wilderness outside and separate from the inside. Houses, attempt to separate people from nature and to confine life "within four sterile walls" ("A Heart Made Out of

Crickets" 113). However, Hogan's characters' views concerning the notion of the house radically differ from this Euroamerican tradition. For them, the confines of the house do not exist as separate from the perceived 'outside'. In *Mean Spirit*, *Power*, and *Solar Storms*, the houses reflect very different values; instead of houses that remain sterile, she depicts nature's disregard for such artificial boundaries.

Repeatedly her characters describe houses as inseparable from nature rather than as artificially autonomous objects. Hogan introduces this theme in the first page of *Mean Spirit* when she writes that "[g]iven half a chance, the vines and leaves would have crept up the beds and overgrown the sleeping bodies of people" (3). She advocates the belief that nature resists spatial confinement. For Hogan, "Beyond walls are lakes and plains / canyons and the universe" ("The New Apartment, Minneapolis" 264); however, in her fiction, she illustrates that "the walls [are] no longer there" ("Amanda" 173). Repeatedly she depicts nature's ability to push through and dismiss spatial barriers. Houses and walls, when perceived as rigid and fixed boundaries that separate civilization from wilderness, are western constructs that exhibit the characteristics of dominant space. Hogan's collapse of space allows us to "[look] through the walls of houses / at people suspended in air" ("The New Apartment, Minneapolis" 263). Her portrayal of people in a suspended state within spatial boundaries illustrates her view of society's space as a rigid and confining construct that suspends life within its artificial walls. Hogan's walls symbolically represents spatial barriers that contain people within rigid and fixed 'spaces' and she uses nature to dissolve spatial barriers.

Hogan portrays nature's disregard for, and its ability to overgrow, man-made constructs in an effort to illustrate her conviction that any attempts, social or man-made, to bind nature or Native Americans are futile. Instead she believes that "the walls of houses / that hold you in / will...[fall] away to earth / once again" ("The Cup" 173). Through her writing and her illustration of the links between tribal traditions and nature, Hogan metaphorically and literally collapses walls and spatial barriers. Grace Blanket places her piano outside where "a neighboring chicken built a nest on the keys" (*Mean Spirit* 9); Sara's and Benoit's mattress became a "nest" in a tree (*Mean Spirit* 119); Jim Josh's bathtubs had "corn...growing" in them, and his car contained "pots and wooden boxes full of tomato plants" (*Mean Spirit* 156); Bush's house on the island had vines that "crept inside and reached across the inner walls" (*Solar Storms* 69); Ama's house has "wood...so rough that moss tries to grow on it and the blue flowers and vines of morning glories climb up it" (*Power* 7); and "the roots of trees are always trying to break" into Herm's cellar (*Power* 90). Hogan utilizes this theme to further her argument that clearly demarcated boundaries between the man-made walls and the 'outside do not exist in nature, and therefore do not exist in Native American experience. By challenging this separatist view of space, she "re-visions" (Salvaggio 273) society's perceived 'reality'.

Like Salvaggio's discussion of women's writings dissolving hierarchical and masculine boundaries¹¹, Linda Hogan uses the characters in her novels, their perspectives, languages, writing, and their worldviews to dissolve the spatial barriers and stereotypes that bind American Indians. She too takes issue with the structuralist assertion that "language itself could be spatialized into a system" and that "Literature and language remained bounded entities" (Salvaggio 266). Hogan's novels question the systemization and regulation of Literature and language and further demolish the "impenetrable" boundaries that surround the literary discipline and theories of space¹².

Through the act of writing¹³ and the power of language, Hogan illustrates dynamic relationships that challenge society's privileging of abstract theories of space. Speaking and writing stories remain crucial to Hogan's attempts to reconfigure social relations because "Story is a power that describes our world, our human being, sets out the rules and intricate laws of human beings in relationship with all the rest" ("First People" 9). The words¹⁴ and stories used in Hogan's writings reflect a tribal worldview and the tribal members' relationships to each other, to nature, and to the western world. Throughout the novel *Mean Spirit*, Linda Hogan's character, Michael Horse, sits in his teepee and types what he later calls "the Gospel of Horse" (273). Father Dunne, the Catholic priest in *Mean Spirit* vehemently protests Horse's addition to the Bible and he continually tells Horse that he "can't do that" (273). According to Protestant and Catholic belief, the Bible became a bound book in the year 397 AD. The Council of Carthage, acting on behalf of its religious institution, decided that no further books could be added to the New Testament Canon of the Bible (Ryrie 1440). Despite the priest's conviction that Horse cannot add a new chapter to the Bible, Horse continues to write. Horse ignores "canonical boundaries" and he "rewrites the Bible" (Ackerberg 13). Hogan uses this act of writing to illustrate that books do not exist as bound and impenetrable texts. Horse irreverently disregards, or remains unaware of, the previous decision. By failing to recognize the council's decision as a social and religious barrier, he illustrates the fragility of the man-imposed boundary and makes a mockery of society's attempt to control and constrain a dynamic force.

Through this example, the author offers her readers a living and dynamic view of writing that differs from academia's attempt to canonize Literature in its 'purest' form. Horse's decision to add a chapter to the Bible also illustrates his view of writing and storytelling as very different from a dominant view of books and Literature because his decision links his writing to a 'living' oral tradition. Horse informs the priest that "the Bible is full of mistakes" and that he "would correct them" (*Mean Spirit* 273). He again challenges the dominant and institutionalized belief that books remain static and rigid objects and he argues that writing remains a dynamic and changeable process.

In *Power*, Hogan's character Omishto's story also reflects aspects of oral storytelling. Omishto relates a story to the reader, to the court, and to her community. The story focuses around an event, a storm, that Omishto experienced in the past, re-experiences as she relates the story in the present, and will experience in the future when she retells the story. The story cycles around itself, constantly shifts, and "is in continuous flux" (Allen 224) as she relates "the same story" (163) but focuses on different interpretations. The story also incorporates traditional tribal stories and songs. Her written works offer her readers a tribal perspective of Native American social relations and writing that differs from the static and separatist view upheld by the "men who have" in "[t]heir attempt to chart the spatial dimensions of literature...sought to measure off and stake out the territory that literary discourse might legitimately be said to occupy" (Salvaggio 263)¹⁵.

Rather than accepting the dominant view of writing and language as oppressive tools used to rigidly control and dominate space—this only occurs if one insists on accepting the view of writing as static—Hogan portrays writing as an act of liberation from spatial boundaries. Michael Horse describes his writing as necessary for the future of his people and as a healing process. He felt "as if he could write away the appearances of things and take them all the way back down to bare truth....He was writing for those who would come later...as if the act of writing was itself part of

divination and prophecy, an act of deliverance" (*Mean Spirit* 341). Horse's perspective of writing alludes to the function that the oral tradition holds within Native American culture, and his description indelibly links the past, the present, and the future to the act of writing and then links writing to a process of healing.

Through her writing, like Horse, Hogan tries to strip away the stagnant and segmented space that society views as reality to reveal the dynamic and organic nature of tribal relations. Through Horse, Hogan deals with the controversial issue concerning writing and the oral tradition. Oral stories traditionally involve the act of speaking, not writing, but Horse answers the question "Why can't you just speak it?" by stating that "They [non-Native people] don't believe anything is true unless they see it in writing" (*Mean Spirit* 361). While the United States' very existence relies on the written word of the Constitution, the American Indian population has an understandable mistrust of written documents that led to the protest dubbed "The Trail of Broken Treaties" (Vander Wall 291). Native Americans have been forced into an abrupt understanding of dominant society's practices through the imposition of allotments, boarding schools, and relocation programs to name a few. However, Hogan and her character Horse recognize the necessity of writing because, rather than living in-between two different worlds, their world has been surrounded, divided, over-shadowed, and infiltrated by the United States' dominant society. Hogan, through Horse, clearly illustrates the different use of language and writing that shapes her works and this variation significantly alters the way Native American writings operate in comparison to the literary canon.

Society, because it perceives reality spatially, attempts to own and appropriate 'other' experience: to 'write' over what it perceives as lack. Hogan's books resist the 'accepted' view of space that remains predicated on notions of ownership and superiority, and she offers a new perspective of social relations based on tribal traditions and experiences. Omishto's struggle to understand the two systems of law that affect her life after her Aunt Ama kills an endangered, society's *term*, and sacred, the Taiga *belief*, panther best illustrates the differences between the two worldviews. Society's law "divide[s] one part of life from another. It has separated by scars, legal theft, even the stone of earth split...and then it covers everything broken all back over in words" (*Power* 118). Omishto's description of society's law reflects its links to abstract ideas that create spatial barriers. Conversely, the tribal law relies on "the laws of this place, this world, laws stronger and older than America" (*Power* 160). Through her exposure to the laws of nature, Omishto experiences a rebirth that results in her eventual understanding of the delicate balance between "right and wrong" (*Power* 62) and her return to the Taiga community. By illustrating Native American tribal experiences and stories as inseparable from nature's laws, Hogan defies society's attempts to appropriate those experiences.

Linda Hogan also uses Hannah Wing to emphasize the dangers of subscribing to society's worldview, which advocates a belief in writing over 'other' experience: which it views as 'empty space'. Hannah's body exemplifies the dangers in believing that language and writing can dominate and own space, and she uses Hannah to protest against the dominant view that led to the "policy of involuntary surgical sterilization...imposed upon native women, usually without their knowledge...during the late 1960's and the first half of the '70's" (Jaimes and Halsey 326). Hannah's character depicts the destructive belief that American Indian women were somehow less than human

and that their bodies represent an 'other' lack to inscribe and an 'other' territory to own. Hannah's body represents an empty space to the men who try to own her and to fill her with the language of violence. Hannah "was a skin that others wore" (*Solar Storms* 77) and "her skin was a garment of scars. There were burns and incisions. Like someone had written on her. The signatures of torturers [emphasis added]" (*Solar Storms* 99). Hannah symbolizes a blank space for others, including Linda Hogan, to write over. The author deliberately juxtaposes the act of torture to the act of writing. Hannah's body becomes the vessel for all the violations that American Indians suffered at the hands of their colonizers. The rape of Hannah's soul by "[t]he signatures of torturers" (*Solar Storms* 99) symbolically represents the theft of Native American land by signatures on treaties.

Hannah's dilemma provides a method of healing these violations and offers a refreshing way to view writing. Through her books, Hogan criticizes language and writing that seeks to dominate, bind, and torture by "successfully...draw[ing] her reader into the Native American value system she is inculcating" (Musher 26). The 'value system' that Musher alludes to, or more precisely Hogan's rejection of abstract space, causes a questioning of the preconceived notions that inform current attitudes towards writing and the literary discipline. Language and words begin to take on a different significance as one reads Hogan's books. Through Hannah, the author emphasizes a theme that permeates her works: the power of song. The "Old Man" tells Bush that healing Hannah would require "a ceremony":

The words of which were so beautiful that they called birds out of the sky, but the song itself would break the singer's life. No one still alive was strong enough to sing it. Not him, he said. Because things had so changed. Not any of the old men or women. And there was a word for what was wrong with her, he said, but no one would say it. They were afraid it would hear its name and come to them. (*Solar Storms* 101)

The significance of this paragraph is manifold; it describes words, in the form of a song, as powerful enough to communicate with nature, to "break life" (*Solar Storms* 101), and to bring harm to whoever dared to invoke the song's power. This excerpt also alludes to the impotence of the song, not because the song lacks strength, but because the passage of time has made the song ineffective. Again, Hogan links the need for flexible, rather than static, views of language and words as they emerge and shift within an oral and tribal framework.

I believe that Hogan offers her books as a new type of ceremony to heal the "lost or stolen souls" (*Solar Storms* 101). Her works act as a continuation of the oral traditions and songs that remain a crucial part of many tribal societies but with one notable exception, that they are written rather than spoken. Her characters often write their way around social and physical barriers, and their works become modern adaptations of the American Indian oral 'living' tradition and remain inseparable from the American Indian worldview. In her novels, characters write to educate others in spite of perceived spatial barriers; Bush becomes "a truth teller" (*Solar Storms* 308) by writing articles in protest at the dam building that get "smuggled" past the road and water barriers in *Solar Storms*, Michael Horse writes an additional chapter to add to the Bible to cover the omissions that exist in the it despite opposition from the church's representative, Moses Graycloud and Michael Horse write two letters to Washington about the deaths in Watona despite the risk to their lives, and Omishto writes "an autobiographical essay" (*Power* 109), that evolves into a story that explains the Taiga traditions

and worldview.¹⁶ Writing becomes an act of resistance against, liberation from, and a place to re-imag(in)e society's constricting spatial boundaries through her stories' connections to the oral tradition and nature. Socially the oral tradition remains a crucial component of Native American life and it influences and is influenced by Native Americans' perspectives and experiences.

For society, language is inseparable from power, and society has sought to bind and constrict language. Ana Castillo argues that "language is the vehicle by which we perceive ourselves in relation to the world" (167). The English language's relationship to power, as it relates to the written word and to legal processes and documents, resides within the power structure behind its creation. Those who command and create language achieve a privileged position, while those who do not are silenced. Trinh T. Minh-ha warns her readers that "Power...has always inscribed itself in language" and that "language is one of the most complex forms of subjugation" (Minh-ha 52). The emphasis that the dominant society places on language, and the manner in which society attempts to own language, an attitude that reflects the socially accepted view that space can be controlled and owned, allows society to wield language as a tool for oppression.

Language, as well as writing, co-exists as a part of Hogan's books rather than something that tries to dominate and control space. Instead, Hogan depicts languages' and writings' fusion with Native American oral traditions. She emphasizes this crucial difference throughout her novels. Her character Belle Graycloud uses "words as a road out of pain and fear" (*Mean Spirit* 33) as she attempts to contextualize Grace Blanket's death for Horse. The author illustrates the healing power of words through Belle's oral rendition of the story, which firmly links the story to the tribe's oral tradition. In her book, *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World*, Hogan states that "It is the story, really, that finds its way into language, and story is at the very crux of healing" (37). Her character Angel, through "words [that] were creation itself" learns to express herself by "finding a language, a story to shape...[herself] by" (*Solar Storms* 94). By subsuming the words into a story within a tribal framework, Hogan illustrates the healing potential of words.

Hogan also depicts the problematic situation caused by privileging one language over others. The non-Indians of Talbert, or Watona, remain bound by a constricting view of language while the Hill Indians and various Indians of Watona benefit from their experience with languages: Father Dunne hears "the sound of earth speaking...It was the deep and dreaming voice of the land" (*Mean Spirit* 188) and Horse learned "the languages of owls and bats" (*Mean Spirit* 260). Michael Horse has already transgressed "the language boundary" when he translated "three languages during the Boxer Rebellion, facilitating communication between the colonizer and the colonized" (Ackerberg 13). His knowledge of languages adds authority to his supplementary book of the Bible. His book becomes a means to promote communication between the "colonizer and the colonized" (Ackerberg 13).

Like the Indians in Watona, Angel, in *Solar Storms*, learns about the power of languages: the women in her family easily negotiate the complex and uncharted waterways because they "were articulate in the language of land, water, animal, even in the harder languages of one another" (193), Husk explains to Angel that "metal bridges were taken down...by the song of wind" (102), and she comes to believe that "there were times...when the [animals and humans] both spoke the same language" (82). In *Power*, Omishto listens to the wind as it "blows their [the old people's] thoughts toward me as I float. As if a small voice is speaking at my ear, one that tells me what it is my people

believe" (180). Again, Hogan questions the power structure behind a worldview that allows for the privileging of one language through the perceived inadequacies and lack of an 'other'. English becomes one way of communicating, but Hogan's characters benefit from their exposure to nature's languages. Her analysis of language, space, literature, the oral tradition, and houses triggers a questioning of society's "static perception of the world" (Freire 159).

Arguably, Hogan collapses current theories of space through her attempts to reconfigure and re-imag(in)e reality by placing her characters' social relations within tribal frameworks, which remain inseparable from nature and its laws. Her stories illustrate both tribal experiences' and nature's resistance to spatially constructed boundaries such as maps and walls. Her reconfiguration of languages, writing, and nature function as the foundation for her attempts to collapse space. Like Nietzsche, Hogan advocates a "dynamic view of a world in constant flux" and "transformation" (Best and Kellner 82). She re-imag(in)es "the 'real'" (Rainwater 139) by collapsing society's spatial boundaries, which do not exist in her experience but instead exist as western constructs. Rather than viewing boundaries as barriers she sees "doorways into the mythical world" (*Dwellings* 19).

Notes

¹ The term re-imag(in)es reflects the method implemented in Native American written narratives of imaging, using “means other than visible light”, to produce a new “image” (*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* 578) of reality. The terms also reflect N. Scott Momaday’s belief in the crucial link between Native American identity and the act of imagination: his mother “imagined who she was” (Momaday, *The Names* 25). Linda Hogan uses her books to *imagine* new perspectives of reality.

² When the word ‘other’ appears in inverted commas, I am alluding to Edward Said’s and Trinh T. Minh-ha’s discussion of cultural otherness.

³ Power, a crucial concept to any discussion concerning oppression or cultural invasion, “marks an exchange between social entities in an unequal relationship; the privileged participant either controls knowledge...or has superior knowledge or authority with respect to an audience made up of various ‘unequals’” (Rainwater, *Dreams* 4). Barry Barnes, in his discussion of power, and especially in his arguments concerning “Divide and Rule” (98), discusses the link between knowledge and power:

For effective domination of large numbers of subordinates in extreme conditions of divide and rule it is important that those subordinates should possess so much knowledge and no more....they should lack whatever knowledge might help them to establish co-operative interactions with others. (101)

By limiting the transmission of information, the “power-holders” (98) ensure their claim to power. This strategy “is a valuable resource in the continued enforcement of their subordination” (102). Arguably, the most effective way to control knowledge is to control education. The “power-holders” (Barnes 98) of the United States use education to disseminate information and knowledge. Academia and education, as tools of cultural invasion, limit the knowledge to which the invaded peoples have access. Academia and the education system as a whole remains linked to the “parochial view of reality” (Freire 159) that demarcates cultural invasion. In this manner, the United States perpetuates its “master narrative” (Durham 427) and excludes ‘other’ narratives.

⁴ Arguably contemporary Native Americans have learned sophisticated methods of negotiating within their invaders’ worldview while maintaining cultural ties to an ‘other’ worldview, and they have managed to incorporate aspects of both cultures into their everyday negotiations and interactions, although the extent to which this phenomenon has occurred remains unique to each person. James Ruppert terms this particular form of social interaction as mediation (Ruppert 3).

⁵ My discussion concerning theoretical discourse in this article borrows from Trinh T. Minh-ha’s debate about theory as “an occupied territory” that “presents itself as a means to exert authority—the Voice of Knowledge” (Minh-ha 42). Society privileges theory due to its links to scientific knowledge, and this privilege serves to oppress and exclude those whom do not engage in theory.

⁶ The capitalization of Our and Ourselves refers to the collective values that define the dominant worldview in the United States.

⁷ Vine Deloria Jr. also goes on to redraw and redefine the geographical terminology that has led to the discrimination that American Indians have suffered at the hands of the “West”. He astutely asserts that Native Americans live in the “western hemisphere” (Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins* 11) and that what has been traditionally labeled as “The West” really only refers to “western Europe” (Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins* 11). By subtly shifting the geographical boundaries implemented by western European Eurocentric thinking, he throws ‘The West’s’ claims of authority and superiority into question. By extension, he undermines the credibility of the entire western tradition and its practices, including its views on theory and space, its dualistic thinking, and the privileging of reason and abstraction over emotion and experience.

⁸ This article must engage with the arguments concerning space and spatial theory delineated in Henri Lefebvre’s book *The Production of Space* due to his impact on the way that the western world currently perceives space. According to Erik Swyngedouw, “Lefebvre’s work holds a unique

position in the intellectual history of Marxism and in the way this history became appropriated by geographers from the late 1960s onwards" (317). His book changes the way in which western societies perceive space and spatial theory.

⁹ Although this article will focus mainly on Native American authors' departure from this western worldview, it is important to note that contemporary Native Americans' daily subjection and exposure to this worldview influences their stories and their tribal contexts. Out of necessity, they have incorporated the western worldview into their tribal contexts, but the western worldview fails to adequately their experiences.

¹⁰ Science seeks to separate and label specimens, or small segments, of an entity in an effort to control and obtain knowledge. Academia adopts this scientific methodology of separating and labeling different areas of study in the same quest for knowledge.

¹¹ She advocates a move away from the territory of theory. Speaking of women's experiences writing within a prevalently male inhabited sphere she argues that "As they [women]...[space] themselves elsewhere, the contours of theory begin to dissolve" (Salvaggio 278) and this style of writing "account[s] for women's *experiences* as well as bring[s] into question both spatial boundaries and their inevitable exclusions [emphasis added]" (Salvaggio 272). In a similar manner, there is a need for ethnic works to move away from the western construct of theory and into writing based on experience.

¹² Ruth Salvaggio outlines the history of theory through her critique of previous spatial theories. She argues that "formalism, modernism, and phenomenology...each of these literary theories shares...a type of spatial identity, a configuration of itself expressed in terms of some spatial form or concept that reflects certain values" (465). By briefly discussing the core thoughts behind each theoretical period, she criticizes the hierarchical and exclusive characteristics of modernist, or "masculine space" (262) and the postmodern feminization of space that occurred due to the development of theoretical approaches to literature.

¹³ Linda Hogan seeks to alter the belief that language and writing are strictly adhered to systems that create elitist barriers. Writing acts as a fitting medium for Hogan's perspective because Literature has been "[d]isplaced from the center to the margins of culture—a move that may in fact be inevitable in the information society..." (Paulson viii), and because of this shift non-canonized ethnic works have been able to penetrate a previously elitist field. According to William Paulson, the current obsession with scientific knowledge has moved Literature from its position within academia as a purveyor of Truth. This shift has enabled ethnic authors to enter the previously elitist field of study, and their new works offer innovative perspectives and new philosophies. In addition, books act as a good example of society's failed attempt to categorize and impose space's artificial boundaries on written works. According to Michel Foucault, a book "is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network" (423). Books fail to remain within their bounds and they bleed out onto the very covers that are meant to contain them: the title and the author are placed outside of the book to entice readers, the publisher places flattering synopses of the book on the back cover, other authors comments are included on the covers, etc. From that point on a stream of criticism issues forth, and critics write about the books which leads other critics write about each others criticisms of the book until you have an unbound and dynamic chain of signification (Derrida 85), or a micro-system that cannot remain autonomous or bound.

¹⁴ Gerald Vizenor states that "The printed word has no evolution in tribal literatures; the word is there, in trees, water, air and printed on paper where it has been at all times" ("Preface" x). Like tradition, tribal knowledge, and oral storytelling, to American Indian authors, their words, language, and by extension their "tribal literatures" (Vizenor, "Preface" x) remain indelibly linked to nature.

¹⁵ Ruth Salvaggio discusses the literary discipline in spatial terms as something that attempts to "occupy" a "territory" or space, and that is "measure[d] off" and "stake[d] out" (263). She further argues that "[t]he space of the canon was mapped out...establishing the bounds for a systematic study of English and American literature" (263). Here again Salvaggio depicts Literature, as a discipline within academia, as a rigid and bounded system that seeks to occupy space.

¹⁶ She later tears up the story "into little pieces" (*Power* 112) because, although it describes her worldview, it does not fulfill the criteria for an inflexible school essay, and society could not imagine the story just as "Ama, too, is nothing they can imagine" (*Power* 130).

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